

Fitness-Related Benefits of Massage

Ask someone their reason for getting a massage and you're likely to hear "because it feels good". We all know that a massage can relieve stress, help to make sore muscles feel better and even reduce anxiety, but can it help us achieve our fitness goals? Research shows that the massage you get to relieve stress can also have a positive effect on your muscle-building capabilities and fitness level.

1. Massage improves circulation and general nutrition of muscles. This appears to be the most valuable fitness-related benefit. Massage is accompanied or followed by an increase interchange of substances between the blood the tissue cells, which increases tissue metabolism. After a muscle is exercised, vital nutrients must be supplied in order for it to increase in size. Massage maximizes the supply of nutrients and oxygen though increased blood flow, which helps the body rebuild itself.
2. Massage improves the range of motion and muscle flexibility. This results in increased power and performance, which helps you work efficiently and with proper intensity to facilitate the body's muscle-building response.
3. Massage helps to shorten recovery time between workouts. Waste products such as lactic and carbonic acid build up in muscles after exercise. Increased circulation to these muscles help to eliminate toxic debris and shorten recovery time.
4. Massage can help prevent over-training. Massage has a relaxing effect on the muscles, as well as a sedative effect on the nervous system. This can prevent over-training syndrome which has limiting effect on muscle building.
5. Massage may aid in fat loss. According to some research, massage may burst the fat capsule in subcutaneous tissue so that the fat exudes and becomes absorbed. In this way, combined with proper nutrition, massage may help in weight loss.
6. Massage helps prevent and even heal injuries. By stretching connective tissue, massage improves circulation to help prevent or break down adhesions. Massage also influences the excretion of certain fluids (nitrogen, phosphorous, sulfur) necessary for tissue repair.

While a massage won't build muscle directly, it helps to facilitate the body's rebuilding phase following a workout and influences muscular

growth. Getting a massage is just as important as regular workouts and supportive nutrition for a comprehensive fitness program. Great news for those of us who thought building a great body was all hard work!

Before making an appointment with the first massage therapist you encounter, however, be sure they are a qualified bodywork practitioner. Ask for referrals, professional training information, and certification credentials from a reputable agency, such as the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB).

About The Author

Jon Gestl, CSCS, is a Chicago personal trainer and fitness instructor who specializes in helping people get in shape in the privacy and convenience of their home or office. He is a United States National Aerobic Champion silver and bronze medalist and world-ranked sportaerobic competitor and editor of the fitness ezine "Inspired Informed and Inshape." He can be contacted through his website at <http://www.jongestl.com>.