

Reflexology in Parkinson's

Reflexology is an ancient healing art based on the principle that the body will, given the opportunity, heal itself and bring about a state of natural balance in order to function to its full capacity. Reflexology practitioners follow the hypotheses that all structures and organs in the body are mirrored on the feet and hands, and, by using specific touching techniques to stimulate the reflex points, can help the body to regain a balanced state.

The dictionary defines the word "reflex" as "an involuntary muscle contraction due to an external stimulus". In Reflexology the term "reflex" can be termed more of a reflection or mirror image of what is happening in the areas of the body represented on the soles and tops of the feet and hands. These reflex points can also be found in the ears, and more and more Reflexologists are using a combination of Foot, Hand and Ear Reflexology to achieve much better results.

Reflexologists use the theory that there are ten zones or energy lines running up and down the body, following a line from each toe and each finger to the top of the head. Blockages of energy occur along these zones, caused by disorder or disease in the organs and structures and Reflexologists aim to release these blockages by using the pressure techniques already mentioned. The therapist will treat the client in a fully holistic manner, taking into consideration the physical, intellectual emotional and spiritual aspects of their lives when seeking the cause of their problems, and not just working on the physical symptoms they exhibit.

Reflexology is an ideal health strategy for prevention of ill health and should not be viewed as a last resort when orthodox medicine has not achieved the desired result in dealing with a health problem. Regular monthly treatments are an excellent way to maintain properly balanced systems and can help prevent the occurrence of disease.

Once illness has taken hold, Reflexology can be used in its fullest sense as a "Complementary" adjunct to medical treatment with the co-operation of the client's doctor / consultant. It is heartening indeed that so many consultants, particularly in the field of Oncology, are now

recognizing the benefits of the anxiety relieving, and calming affects of this valuable therapy.

Reflexology teaches that a vital energy or life force, such as that acknowledged in Oriental medicine flows through all organs and tissues of the body. Reflexologists are trained in the pressure and massage techniques designed to disperse these energy blockages which often manifest themselves as crystalline deposits in the feet and hands. Circulation of both blood and lymphatic systems is stimulated so that accumulating toxins may be excreted and cases of stress tension and fatigue relieved.

A visit to a Reflexologist.

You have heard about this thing called Reflexology and you feel you would like to find out a bit more about it so you pluck up the courage make the appointment, and wonder what you have let yourself in for.

Ideally your chosen therapist will greet you with a smile and a handshake, while ushering you into a clean tidy and suitably heated treatment room. The therapist should be appropriately and tidily attired. The bathroom facilities should be pointed out to you. The therapist may have a plinth /couch for you to lie on, or a chair and footrest. You will be asked to remove your shoes and socks and make yourself comfortable on the plinth or chair. The therapist will then take a detailed medical history and request you to sign a consent for treatment form.

The therapist will gently cleanse the feet with antiseptic wipes while inspecting your feet and toes for any sign of injury or infection such as Athlete's Foot (Tinea). As this is an infectious condition, the therapist may suggest ways to treat this and postpone the appointment until it has cleared up.

The therapist will then demonstrate the type of pressure to expect as he / she begins to go over every part of each foot, and explain that, should there be any discomfort ranging from mild sense of extra pressure to a severe dart in a particular area, you need to tell the therapist about it. Talcum powder or a small amount of oil may be used on your skin for your comfort during the

treatment. The therapist will ask you questions regarding the functioning of various bodily systems and will give appropriate advice on how to help to improve matters.

Reflexologists do not diagnose specific illnesses unless they also have a medical degree. Reflexologists deal with areas of the body where the normal flow of energy through the organs and structures is impeded. This can occur when disease or disorder currently exists in the body or may indicate that the immune system is not working to full capacity and so leave the body vulnerable to attack from viral and bacterial infection. Stress of any kind also creates many physical conditions. Your symptoms may indicate a specific disease, but if you have not seen a doctor you should always be referred to your G.P. for evaluation.

By the end of the treatment your therapist will be able to tell you the areas that needed extra attention as he/ she will have gone over every organ and structure during the course of the treatment. Your symptoms may reflect major tension and stress related problems in which case practical advice regarding lifestyle changes may be appropriate. If you have long standing problems then a course of 6 – 8 treatments may be advised as a single treatment will not be enough to rebalance the body. The therapist will also be able to recommend other therapies including Counselors, Psychotherapists, Self help groups etc. should it be felt that this may be helpful to you. The treatment should end with a gentle massage, relaxing strokes and techniques and some deep breathing to promote relaxation.

You should be advised as to what you may experience following treatment and how to deal with any responses. A glass of water or herbal tea may be offered to you, and you should be advised to drink at least 8 glasses of water in the course of the next 12 hours in order to eliminate the toxins which will have been released during the treatment. A follow up appointment should be arranged if necessary.

How Reflexology Affects the Body

Reflexology affects the body in different ways and no two clients will have identical experiences. The main effects can be summarized as follows:

- It helps maintain general health
- It reduces stress and tension by relaxing the whole person.
- It decreases congestion in the energy pathways allowing energy to circulate freely.
- It helps to encourage homeostasis i.e. a state of balance in the body.
- It helps boost the circulation of Blood and Lymph through their respective systems.

- It helps regulate bodily functions such as Digestive, Endocrine, Respiratory and Excretory systems.
- It helps increase energy levels.
- It helps improve mental alertness.
- It instills a feeling of well-being and contentment.
- It improves physical conditions or injuries.
- It stimulates creativity and productivity.
- It helps improve inter-relationships between body systems.

Reactions the client may observe during a treatment.

- You may experience a sense of well-being.
- You may experience a sense of relaxation.
- You may sigh, breathe deeply or yawn, or fall asleep.
- You may feel like laughing or crying.
- You may experience a tingling sensation in the feet or through the body.
- You may have pin stick type feelings in the feet over congested areas.
- You may experience Temperature change either hot or cold.
- You may experience nausea.
- You may feel a sense of unease due to emotional problems.
- You may feel a sense of comfort.

Who can benefit from Reflexology?

- Everybody from cradle to centenarian can experience the benefits of Reflexology. Children simply love any form of touch and respond very quickly indeed to the benefits of Reflexology.
- It is particularly effective in helping to soothe and control colic in infants.
- Asthma, ear and throat infections, digestive disturbances and bedwetting can be controlled successfully.
- It is an ideal therapy during pregnancy and a valuable tool during labour and the birth process.
- It is used for people with degenerative diseases such as Multiple Sclerosis and while it cannot cure diseases such as this it can often help delay the decline of various bodily functions such as urinary and bowel control.
- Cancer patients can also be treated with the permission of the consultant and is used in many of the Cancer Support Centres. In its very gentlest form it can be used in palliative care and provides a way of using touch to comfort and support loved ones in their final hours.

Does Reflexology have any side effects ?

Reflexology has no known side effects but please note the following:

- Care is advisable in some cases such as those on the fertility drug Clomid and also anyone currently undergoing I.V.F treatment.
- It may not be recommended at all for anyone with a diagnosed clot in a blood vessel anywhere in the body.
- anyone with a diagnosed clot in a blood vessel anywhere in the body.
- any serious blood clotting problem.
- anyone with severe undiagnosed pain, diabetics with poor blood circulation in their feet or anyone with major arterial or venous ulcers on their feet. (Hand Reflexology may be used in such cases if the blood circulation is considered adequate).

Reactions to a treatment

Reactions can occur as the body begins to eliminate toxins that have been released into the lymphatic and excretory organs during a treatment. Slight nausea or mild diarrhoea may occur but no reaction should be strong enough to alarm a client. Such symptoms can be an encouraging sign that the treatment is working.

Possible reactions that can occur

- Cold-like symptoms such as a running nose as catarrh and sinus congestion are cleared.
- A cough as mucus is cleared from the lungs and respiratory passages.
- More frequent urination.
- More frequent bowel movements.
- Flatulence.
- Headaches.
- Increased sweating.
- Skin rash....some skin problems get worse before improving.
- Yawning and tiredness.
- Increased energy.

Suggested Aftercare

- Increase the amount of water you drink every day. At least 8 glasses on the day of treatment. Take a daily 20/30 minute brisk walk, breathing as fully and deeply as possible.
- When indoors go without shoes whenever possible.
- Weather permitting walk with bare feet outdoors particularly on grass, sand sea and river or lakeside stones as this is a mini Reflexology treatment in itself.
- In cold weather soaking the feet in hot water before bedtime will help revive circulation. Adding sea salt or a small sack of freshly grated ginger is also beneficial .
- After soaking the feet use either a pumice stone or emory board to file away any hardened skin on feet or toes. It is important to keep the skin surface as smooth and soft as possible.
- Try to avoid eating too many sugary and fatty foods and cut down on caffeine intake . Try herbal teas instead allowing them to infuse for the correct amount of time to extract maximum flavour.
- Try to spend some time consciously relaxing each day by sitting quietly, listening to relaxing music, meditation, yoga, etc., to help your body de-stress.
- Do something nice for yourself once a day.

Acknowledgements

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DISCLAIMER – The information on these pages, whilst professionally sourced or assessed, is not intended to be taken as advice. No changes to your treatment should be made without prior consultation with your doctor or allied health professional.

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