

# Natural Resources Day Spa Tranquility Journal

Summer 2013

Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

## Expecting Moms Embrace Massage

### Pregnancy Massage Contributes to Nine Healthy Months

Hope Bentley

During pregnancy physical and emotional changes cascade throughout the body. Nausea, fatigue, swelling, heartburn, headache, and emotional turbulence are just some of the symptoms that come with the territory. Fortunately, massage can help ease these issues, so that the mom-to-be can focus on what's most important: her baby.

#### The First Trimester

"In the first trimester I see a lot of cases of nerves," says Megan O'Connor, a New York-based certified prenatal massage therapist. "Massage can give reassurance." This is largely because newly pregnant women may experience a range of emotions--elation, anxiety,

founder of Niara Healing Arts Massage Therapy and Perinatal Support Systems, "It is absolutely safe and can be very beneficial for an expecting mother."

Having said that, there are some precautions to take when considering prenatal massage. If it is a high-risk pregnancy or there's a history of complications--diabetes, high blood pressure, miscarriages, placenta previa, preeclampsia, or any other medical condition--a midwife or doctor should be consulted before scheduling a massage. In addition, it is very important for pregnant clients to speak openly with their massage therapist about any concerns or issues.



Massage can help contribute to a healthy pregnancy--and a healthy baby.

contentment, and even fear--made more poignant by the hormonal changes that accompany pregnancy. Fortunately, massage therapy can help ground an expecting mother and ease the emotional roller coaster that comes with pregnancy.

But is massage safe in the first trimester? According to Susanrachel Condon,

On the other hand, bodywork techniques like shiatsu access the meridians used in acupuncture, including trigger points that can relieve nausea. According to O'Connor, a good therapist will also teach a mother-to-be how to activate the trigger points herself, as most nausea treatments are more

**Continued on page 2**

*Everything you  
do can be done  
better from a  
place of  
relaxation.*

-Stephen C. Paul

#### Office Hours and Contact

##### Natural Resources Day Spa

**(814) 678-2345**

**Monday - Saturday**

**9:30 A.M. - 5 P.M.**

**Appointments Available After Hours**

#### In this Issue

**Expecting Moms Embrace Massage  
Facial Massage for Lymphatic Drainage  
The Case for Chocolate**

Continued from page 1

effective when applied at least three times a day. Techniques such as this can be a great relief to a woman navigating the early days of pregnancy.

## The Second Trimester

A woman in her second trimester may begin to have trouble with circulation, sometimes because the baby's weight begins to pinch the major veins in the mother's legs. Poor circulation can cause swelling of the extremities, headaches, and exacerbated carpal tunnel syndrome. Massage will increase circulation and help create space in the body to relieve the pressure from the baby's weight. Condon explains that weight gain and joint laxity can cause women to feel off balance and clumsy. Massage can relax the muscles around the joints and ground and balance a pregnant woman.

## The Third Trimester

As the baby grows heavy in the final trimester of pregnancy, major changes are likely to occur in the musculoskeletal system, and massage can become even more essential.

"A lot of women feel discomfort in their lower backs because the womb is moored to the sacrum, which is that triangle of area at the base of the spine," O'Connor says. "The weight of the womb pulls on that mooring and can be very uncomfortable."

Women may also experience discomfort in their abdomen. As the baby grows, the mother's muscles are stretched, her organs are compacted, and her lungs are compressed. Massage can minimize or prevent abdominal muscle tear, a complication that happens with some women. A practitioner can also help reposition the baby to alleviate discomfort and ease breathing.

And when labor finally begins, massage can help facilitate the birth, perhaps especially appealing for women considering natural childbirth.

## On the Table

But how exactly does a pregnant woman--complete with enormous tummy and tender chest--receive a massage? Many prenatal massages are given with the pregnant woman on her side, semi-reclined, briefly on her back,

or on a specially designed pregnancy massage table, and often with a network of pillows for support.

Condon explains that prenatal massage is not simply a regular massage except in a different position. A qualified prenatal massage therapist will know the changing physiognomy of a pregnant woman and will tailor the massage to the needs of the client.

## Postpartum Massage

Now that baby is here, mom needs a massage more than ever. Says O'Connor, "I think postpartum massage is extremely underrated."

After baby arrives, bodywork can help a new mother ease back into her body again, relax sore muscles, address any abdominal muscle strains or tears that occurred during pregnancy, and cope with the life changes and lack of sleep

that come with a new baby. In addition, the uterus will sometimes linger low in the abdomen instead of returning to its proper place. A Maya abdominal massage therapist can help restore the uterus to its proper position.

Nursing moms may feel reluctant to book a massage due to leaking breasts, but O'Connor says not to worry. "Women shouldn't be concerned about massage while they're nursing, even if they feel like an uncapped fire hydrant!" she says. Practitioners will accommodate nursing women, with proper draping and towels.

Pregnancy is an important time that needs to be honored, and prenatal massage plays an important role. As the body goes through miraculous changes, bodywork facilitates pregnancy and helps the expectant mother stay comfortable, connected, and healthy.



Prenatal massage can greatly benefit an expecting mother throughout her pregnancy.

# Facial Massage for Lymphatic Drainage

Natalia Doran

A well-performed facial massage will help relieve puffiness and improve skin tone and complexion. Other physical benefits include stimulation of the skin's immune mechanisms, firming of weak muscles, tissue regeneration, and antiaging effects. Mental benefits include stress relief and a greater awareness of the body-mind connection. And applying pressure and movement through massage can help to normalize the function and composition of the connective tissue, and free it of harmful substances.

## Lymphatic Massage

The body's lymphatic system drains away the debris from our cells. It transports water out of the tissue, along with waste substances: bacteria, cell fragments, immobile cells, inorganic substances, large molecular fats, proteins, and viruses. This process is constantly happening all over the body. With massage, the lymph system can move up to 10 times more fluid than it normally does.

Manual lymph drainage (MLD), which was developed by Emil Vodder, PhD, is a type of gentle massage that accelerates the natural circulation of the lymph and encourages its movement away from swollen areas. MLD is firm, but gentler than ordinary massage. Because the lymph vessels are all interlinked, lymph flow will be affected in the entire region of the area being massaged. Other types of lymphatic massage include lymph drainage therapy, developed by Bruno Chikly, MD.

A facial massage that involves lymphatic work improves circulation to the skin, which increases nutrition to the skin cells and speeds up the filtering of water in and out of cells. The vasodilation of the surface capillaries during massage improves skin color, and facial massage also improves elasticity and suppleness of the skin. With facial massage, the skin becomes more balanced, less prone to breakouts, and more resistant to infection. Massage movements also influence muscular hypertension

through the autonomic nervous system.

*Natalia Doran, MD, is the founder and president of the International Skin Beauty Academy in Illinois.*



Facial massage has a host of health benefits.

# The Case for Chocolate

## New Studies Show Health Benefits

It's not like we need a specific reason to eat chocolate, but it doesn't hurt that studies are finding increasing health benefits associated with the popular indulgence. While chocolate is high in sugar and saturated fat, it does contain chemical compounds with proven benefits, so enjoy--in moderation--and expect to reap some of these rewards.

### Improved Heart Health

A study in the Archives of Internal Medicine found that women over 70 who ate chocolate at least once a week were 35 percent less likely to suffer from heart disease during the survey period. Researchers suspect that the flavonoids found in chocolate, which are known to reduce blood pressure, likely improve overall cardiovascular health.

### Reduced Liver Strain

These same flavonoids in dark chocolate that help decrease blood pressure can also reduce post-meal abdominal blood pressure spikes that strain the liver by widening and relaxing blood cells. A Spanish study of patients with end-stage liver disease showed that dark chocolate helped reduce some of the risks associated with conditions like cirrhosis.

### Safer Pregnancy

Dark chocolate has been shown to help pregnant women avoid preeclampsia--a significant complication where blood pressure spikes to dangerous levels--by nearly 40 percent when consumed five times a week. Dark chocolate is especially rich in theobromine, which relaxes muscles and dilates blood vessels. As an additional benefit, it also seems to

improve circulation in the placenta.

### Increased Endurance

Research out of the University of California, San Diego, demonstrated that mice given epicatechin, a flavonoid found in dark chocolate, could run for 50 percent longer than those who only drank water. The mice also grew new capillaries and mitochondria in their muscles, changes that explain their enhanced endurance capacity. Unfortunately, perhaps, for chocolate lovers, is that researchers say just one-sixth of 1 ounce of chocolate each day is the ideal serving size to receive this benefit.

We hope you enjoyed reading our summer newsletter. It is stuffed with great information that we hope you will find helpful. Please make sure to pass the newsletter along once you're done reading it.

There's more exciting news to share! Don't forget to check us out on Facebook! Make sure to "Like" us so that you can stay informed with our monthly specials. You can also "Check In" when you come to visit!

Sincerely,  
Natural Resources Day Spa  
Respite for Mind, Body And Spirit

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