



Touch for Health

A big bear hug. A warm caress. From birth to old age – touch is our first sense to develop and the last to diminish. The touch of another human is so critical to our development, health and emotional well being that therapist and author Virginia Satir declared, “human beings need four hugs a day for survival, eight hugs a day for maintenance and 12 hugs a day for growth”.

Sadly, as our modern world has changed so has our touch quotient. Technology reduces the need for human contact – we shop on line, get our cash at machines, host meetings through audio or video conferencing and are encouraged to avoid close contact during flu season. Even more unfortunately, executives use great caution when touching others to avoid any impression of inappropriate behavior. We are so guarded that some experts consider us “touch phobic”.

Yet the therapeutic benefits of touch have been widely known and practiced for thousands of years. We are familiar with the benefits of massage to relax muscles, stimulate circulation and release toxins. What you may not know is that these touch therapies can impact health to an even greater degree. The Touch Research Institute completed many studies in a variety of different age groups with specific and significant research findings; enhanced growth (in preterm infants), diminished pain (in fibromyalgia), decreased autoimmune problems (increased pulmonary function in asthma and decreased glucose levels in diabetes), enhanced immune function (increased natural killer cells in HIV and cancer), and enhanced alertness and performance (EEG pattern of alertness and better performance on math computations).

Among the many types of massage, one unique option is Reflexology, or zone therapy. In this practice, the masseuse will squeeze or push areas of the feet, hands and/or ears, with the objective of creating beneficial effects on other specific parts of the body, or to improve overall health.

More unique therapeutic touch therapies are based on the concept of manipulating an individual’s own energy with the universal life force energy to balance energy flow. The concept is that if your "life force energy" is low, then you are more likely to get sick or feel stress, and if it’s high, you are more likely to be happy and healthy. While the techniques and terminologies



vary slightly, you may have heard of Reiki, Mahi Kari, Muri El, Therapeutic Touch, and Jo Ray.

While supporters of these energy methods claim undisputed healing, critics claim that the benefits are an aspect of the effects of relaxation via touch. Either way - the good news is that the risks to energy therapy are minimal with few reports of headaches, anxiety, or dizziness – but many people find the benefits outweigh these minor side effects.

Discovering the keys to health and wellness is more than just eating well, exercising and sleep. Taking the time to embrace your loved ones and to care for yourself through touch and massage can increase your quality of life. To learn more about staying healthy, make an appointment with your doctor at Executive MD.

John Mamana, M.D.

Executive MD

John@ExecutiveMD.com

703-260-6455