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Off the Table

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When Not to Get a Massage

By Kevin Smith

You might have the impression that it's always a good time for a massage, and I would say that's usually true – but there are times where it's just not beneficial and may even be dangerous to your health. Sometimes, it's just an area of your body that may need to be avoided but this article will explore some "total contraindications", meaning you should not have a massage and if you show up to your appointment, you might go home without it.

Skin diseases or conditions like burns, blisters, or traumatic injuries are a rather obvious reason to avoid your massage for a while. After all, if it hurts to be touched, why get a massage?

If you have an infection, fever, or a contagious virus of any kind, definitely postpone your massage if not for your sake, for the sake of your therapist and his or her other clients. For a cold, it's believed that once your symptoms are gone, you're no longer contagious but for the flu, figure about seven days from the first day of your symptoms. Even if you feel fine, you may still be able to spread it in that time frame.

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The most essential reasons to avoid massage is if you have some high-risk conditions like uncontrolled hypertension, severe osteoporosis, or unstable blood clots. Blood clots are especially dangerous as your therapist could unknowingly dislodge one and could even lead to your death. See your doctor first if you suspect you might be at risk for any of these and follow his or her advice regarding massage.

General inflammation, recent medical conditions including injuries, treatments, and surgeries, and certain medications can also be good reasons to delay your massage appointment. And you most certainly will be refused by your therapist if you attempt to attend your appointment impaired by alcohol or drugs.

This is not an exhaustive list, but maybe it's enough to help you answer the question whether or not you should make or keep your massage appointment. When in doubt, it's always worth getting written approval from your doctor beforehand. That way both you and your therapist can be comfortable that your session will be both of benefit to you and safe.



Photo by Francisco Ventancio

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Secrets of Sleep

By Jed Heneberry

We've all heard it before: get your eight hours of sleep and watch your life improve. But the reason we've all heard it is because it's true, and research keeps showing the importance of sleep and its variety of health benefits.

The National Sleep Foundation says there is no "magic number" of hours for optimum sleep benefits, but that different age groups, and even different individuals, need different amounts of sleep. General recommendations are 7-8 hours per night for adults, while children often need 10-11 hours. Getting less than what you need has been linked to an increased risk of diabetes, heart problems, psychiatric conditions, and more.

Here's a quick look at some new findings that reveal the secrets of sleep, and also how to get more of it.

- **Sleep Suppresses Appetite:** Just one night of sleep loss can increase brain activity in the region that contains appetite sensation in response to food images, increasing the long-term possibility of becoming overweight. ("Lack of Sleep Makes Your Brain Hungry," *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology Metabolism*.)
- **Naps for Your Noggin:** The right side of the brain, which is generally associated with creativity, is active during so-called power naps, while the left brain remains mostly quiet. While it is not clear what exactly is happening during these brief rest periods, researchers suspect the brain is conducting important memory tasks. ("Power Naps' May Boost Right-Brain Activity," *Health.com*.)
- **Cherry on Top:** Drinking tart cherry juice increased melatonin in study participants, improving sleep efficiency, quality, and time. ("Effect of Tart Cherry Juice on Melatonin Levels and Enhanced Sleep Quality," *European Journal of Nutrition*.)

"A massage is just like a movie; really relaxing and a total escape, except in a massage you're the star.

And you don't miss anything by falling asleep."
~ Elizabeth Jane Howard ~



High Time for Tea

Discover the Healing Properties of Taking Tea

By Brenda Armstrong

The health research is enough to make you forego the latte for strong brewed tea instead. Name your color – black, white, green, even red – teas are packed with disease-preventing antioxidants (more than some fruits and vegetables) and contain vitamins, minerals, and at least half the caffeine of coffee.

Fortified with free radical-fighting polyphenols, tea drinkers have a reduced risk of many different cancers, in particular stomach, colorectal, and even skin cancer. Tea drinkers also have a lower risk of heart disease, stroke, and high cholesterol. Containing anti-inflammatory and arthritis-preventing properties, tea also helps stimulate the immune system and protect the liver against toxins.

But you have to drink up. Most research points to five or so cups of brewed tea each day to reap the health benefits. Decaf tea loses some but not much of its health punch, due to extra processing.

All traditional tea – white, green, oolong, and black – is derived from the leaves of an evergreen tree called the *Camellia sinensis*, and all contain the health-promoting polyphenols. White tea is made from young tea leaves, dried in the sun without fermentation or processing. Green tea is dried with hot air after picking, so it retains its color but is not fermented. Oolong tea, sometimes referred to as "brown" tea, is fermented but not processed to the point of black tea. Black tea, on the other hand, is fully fermented, which accounts for the color of the leaves and its stronger flavor.

Rooibos, or red tea, is naturally caffeine-free and from the *Aspalathus linearis*, a shrub that grows only at high altitude near Cape of Good Hope in South Africa.

Herbal teas are made from a variety of plants, roots, bark, seeds, and flowers and are technically herbal infusions rather than tea. Though they don't contain the same antioxidants and haven't received the same research-based accolades as traditional tea, the herbs in these infusions have certain healing properties that have been used for centuries to treat many common health issues.

When Everything Looks Like a Nail

Why It's Always Reasonable to Seek Out a Second Opinion

By Kevin Smith

I recently heard an interesting quote at a CE course with which I was assisting: When all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail. This is important for bodyworkers to acknowledge in that it helps us realize there are other approaches worth investing our time to understand and maybe learn ourselves, but it's also important for clients and patients to remember.

We all tend to go to what we know when looking for solutions. A surgeon knows the surgical solution; an internist, the pharmaceutical solution; a personal trainer, the workout solution; as an orthopedic massage therapist, I tend towards the tissue-manipulation solution...and on it goes throughout the industry. And every one of us has

the best solution – part of the time.

So I encourage you to keep this in mind when caring for your health. Your issue may not be "a nail" and a different tool could be far more effective for you. Explore the options you have.

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Exercise Myths

Fiction vs. Fact



Although old fitness fictions like "no pain, no gain" are fading fast, plenty of misconceptions still exist. Following are some of the most common myths, counteracted by the latest research.

FICTION: You will burn more fat if you exercise longer at a lower intensity.

FACT: The most important focus in exercise and weight control is how many calories are burned during the activity. The faster you walk, step or run, the more calories you use per minute. However, high-intensity exercise may be more difficult to sustain.

FICTION: If you're not going to work out hard and often, exercise is a waste of time.

FACT: Any exercise is better than none. For

example, regular walking or gardening for as little as an hour a week has been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease.

FICTION: If you exercise long and hard enough, you will always get the results you want.

FACT: In reality, genetics plays an important role in how people respond to exercise. Your development of strength, speed, and endurance may be very different from that of other people you know.

FICTION: The health and fitness benefits of mind-body exercise like t'ai chi and yoga are questionable.

FACT: The benefits abound! T'ai Chi, for example, has been shown to help treat low-back pain and fibromyalgia. Improved flexibility, strength, and stress management are just some of the benefits.

FICTION: Home workouts are fine, but going to a gym is the best way to get fit.

FACT: Some people find it easier to stick to a home-based fitness program. In spite of all the hype on trendy exercise programs and facilities, the best program for you is the one you will participate in consistently.

This information was provided by IDEA, www.idealife.com.