

Massage for a balanced working life

Work is a major part of our lives with estimates suggesting we work up to 35-50 hours per week, and for some people it's more. Ros Baressi looks at how best to ease the pain of our toil

Work is varied amongst people; some do physical, some sit at desks and some are on the move all the time. Intensive labour work like building, tree surgery, brick laying, roofing and scaffolding require physical fitness a lot of the time. A mixture like teaching physical education, kitchen work or waiting tables probably offers a good balance. Office jobs that keep the worker sat down a lot of the time is possibly the worst for us. We are not designed to sit constantly for a full day. We need to be moving regularly [see article, page xx].

Power of touch

Massage is a great way to relieve tired, strained and tense muscles. It helps to stretch them out when they have been shortened too from too much work or training. It is the one of the oldest therapies in the world so there is a strong foundation of evidence that it works. The ancient Greeks and Egyptians used massage as well as in China. The power of touch is very important. Yet, at times, we avoid looking after ourselves and usually at the very moment we should be. It's important to stop and think regularly about what we are doing with our bodies. How we sit, stand, walk, run, cycle and lie down all have an impact on our body and skeletal system. This has a knock-on effect on our muscular system and, subsequently, on other systems. It's

important to be aware of how we use our bodies because we get so swamped with other factors and run on auto pilot that we forget what we should be doing.

Posture

Working at a desk is notorious for this. It can cause so many issues with back, neck and general posture that we are getting so many problems walking through surgery doors. It's a good idea to keep a check on this as it can benefit us in the long run. We should remind patients that if we can keep our posture in a correct way then we can reduce misalignment and crooked spines, stiff shoulders, aches and pains. Sitting correctly can be so beneficial to our postures and our general working life, yet we forget and we slouch – having a regular massage is beneficial. Also practising mindfulness can help us to use our bodies more correctly. Massage is both preventative and remedial and can play an important role in our lives; enabling our muscles to feel relaxed and our systems to work properly. But massage doesn't just stop there; it helps circulation system by keeping any stagnation at bay; this enables the body to stay healthy and allows toxins to leave the body accordingly. We need to move regularly in order for these toxins to be eliminated and, if they stay in our systems, they can cause problems, illnesses and conditions.



Ros Barresi is a sports and remedial massage practitioner based in and around Oxfordshire. For more about Ros and her work, visit www.rosbarresi.co.uk

Case study 1

Client A has been having massage from me for over a year now and benefits greatly. She has had an underactive thyroid and so massage has helped her to alleviate the tiredness and to get her back on track with exercising and managing at work.

1. How long have you been having massage on a regular basis?

About 18 months

2. How does it help you from week to week in your routine?

Helps me to relax/unwind from work stress/pressure and I know every week I have a massage scheduled. Also helps to focus on particular areas if there are different aches/pains, or areas of tension on any particular week.

3. Do you find it keeps certain ailments at bay?

It helps with controlling stress, and can help to prevent stress-related ailments. Also helps with ensuring I take better care of my back, and focuses my mind on putting me first for an hour instead of work.

4. If you have a break from massage do you feel it?

Yes – more uptight and less relaxed

5. Does your back feel better on a regular basis?

Having the massage helps my back when it is aching, and maintaining weekly massages is also preventative in terms of back pain.

6. Do you feel massage is an integral part of working life?

I would really miss it if it wasn't there, and it's really good it is available on site, so it fits in as part of my day; it saves having to book appointments outside and rush around. I think it's important in a stressful work environment to take time out and really relax for a while; it makes me feel I'm doing something good to look after myself, so I can cope better with work demands.

Case study 2

Client B has been seeing me for quite a few years and definitely benefits as he works in an office with tension build up in his shoulders. He works long hours at times in software support with two large screens. He has monthly massage.

1. How long have you been having massage on a regular basis?

Around four years once per month. If I am lucky, maybe twice.

2. How does it help you from week to week in your routine?

After sitting in front of a PC looking at a monitor, I tend to lean forward so it gives me bad posture. The massage helps to realign my back and makes me want to keep sitting upright to enable a good feeling. It also helps me with standing posture as well; I personally feel taller after a massage as my body is telling me I must have a straighter back.

3. Do you find it keeps certain ailments at bay?

Yes.

4. If you have a break from massage do you feel it?

Yes, I can't go without my massage. I always look forward to my monthly appointment to help me sit upright when working at my desk.

5. Does your back feel better on a regular basis?

After the massage it does and helps me try and keep a good sitting posture.

6. Do you feel massage is an integral part of working life?

Yes, I couldn't think of a month without a massage.

