

massage gets rave reviews

For back pain, neck pain, osteoarthritis and fibromyalgia, respondents to a *Consumer Reports* survey said that massage therapy provided more relief than medication. That's so important, I'm going to say it again. **Massage therapy provided more relief than medication!** (Please do not stop taking your medication.) Please do consider using massage to treat and manage your pain.

In its August 2005 issue, *Consumer Reports* shares the results of a survey of 34,000 readers on the effectiveness of "alternative" treatments for a variety of ailments. Before addressing the results of the survey any further, I must say that the word "complementary" is more appropriate than "alternative" to differentiate these treatments from standard medical protocol. (The coverage of this survey in *WebMD Medical News* bears the headline "Massage, Chiropractic Top



Medical Alternatives". That is unfortunate.)

Massage is *not* an alternative to medical care. In fact, it is most effective when combined with other treatments and, first and foremost, a commitment to self-care.

In all fairness, *Consumer Reports* does admit "that most alternatives may make more sense as an adjunct to conventional care than as a primary cure." They go on to say that "exceptions were two hands-on alternative treatments, chiropractic and deep-tissue massage." **Massage and structural bodywork may be just the thing to get to the source and correct the problem.** When combined with other treatments and diligent self-care, massage becomes an integral part of any wellness program.

"Clinical studies of massage show that it appears to ease not only low back pain, osteoarthritis, and fibromyalgia, but also other conditions such as cancer-related pain, postsurgical pain, and headaches." There are two different mechanisms at work to achieve pain relief with massage.

First, massage and structural bodywork can treat the *source* of

the pain. Your back pain, neck pain, or headaches could be caused by (and/or be made worse by) muscle spasm, muscle strain or trigger points. These may be caused by more fundamental biomechanical problems that can be corrected with structural bodywork and attention to movement habits.

I so firmly believe that pain and injury can be effectively treated with orthopedic massage and bodywork, I've made it my specialty!

If your pain is caused by something massage cannot directly affect, general massage can still provide pain relief through its powerful effect on the nervous system. Massage treats pain directly *and* indirectly.

General relaxing massage calms the hyper-vigilant nervous system of the chronic pain patient, reduces stress and anxiety, and improves sleep. It also releases endorphins, the body's natural painkillers. **Massage breaks the cycle of chronic pain.**

In a survey published by the Fibromyalgia Network News last October, massage "ranked number one with patients by a large

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margin, receiving three times as many votes as any other option.” It was further explained that “relieving pain, reducing medication use, and enhancing range of motion were common reasons that patients sought out a professional massage therapist.”

Massage is safe, effective, and has no harmful side effects. And it works. “Because the effects are so compelling,” says Tiffany Field, PhD, Director of the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami School of Medicine, “I recommend a regular dose, just like diet and exercise.”

Sources: (1) “Which Alternative Treatments Work?”, *Consumer Reports*, August 2005: 39-43; (2) “Massage, Chiropractic Top Medical Alternatives” by Daniel DeNoon, *WebMD Medical News*, June 2005, <http://my.webmd.com/content/Article/108/108766.htm>; (3) *Fibromyalgia Network News*, October 2004.

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