



REFLEXOLOGY TO TARGET HEALTH CONCERNS

From easing backache to boosting low energy or refreshing tired hands, reflexology provides a safe and convenient adjunct to standard medical treatment.

In this chapter, we present in-depth advice on addressing a number of disorders and health concerns, with descriptions of techniques and reflex areas appropriate to each.

USING REFLEXOLOGY FOR HEALTH CONCERNS

Applying reflexology work to the whole hand prompts overall relaxation and a sense of well-being as well as relaxing the hand itself. When addressing specific health concerns, technique application is focused on specific reflex areas corresponding to the parts or organs of the body that are giving rise to concern. In this case, those specific reflex areas can be worked on following a general workout or — if time is short or the problem acute — they can be targeted in a specially tailored mini-session.

When planning a mini-session to target a specific health concern, focus attention on the reflex area that corresponds to the particular area of concern. For some concerns, the selection of reflex areas will follow the reflexology chart: for example, if the health concern is with the function of the lungs — as, for instance, with disorders such as asthma, emphysema, and bronchitis — then the reflexology work will target the lung reflex.

In addition to the primary reflex area, however, additional reflexes may be chosen for their impact on the particular health concerns. For example, as well as working the lung reflex area, the adrenal reflex gland may also be targeted to help relieve the symptoms of bronchitis. The adrenal glands are responsible for producing hormones that are needed for fighting inflammation, so work applied to this reflex area may prompt speedier healing.

WORKING ROUND THE CONCERN

Stress is a factor in some 80 percent of health concerns and, in those cases, reflex areas corresponding to the body's tension spots are targeted for additional technique emphasis. When planning a mini-session to relieve an upset digestive system, for example, the solar plexus reflex area (which can be worked to relieve tension and stress) will be included along with the reflex areas of the stomach, small intestine, and colon.

As you apply reflexology techniques, take note of which reflex areas give the best results. You may find a particular combination of reflex areas that works best for you. If you find that work on a specific part of the hand feels good, apply extra technique there. Particularly with self-help reflexology work, experiment with reflex areas, techniques, and random parts of the hand — or with areas to which you find yourself drawn.

REFLEXOLOGY STRATEGIES

There are no hard and fast rules for deciding how much and how often to apply technique. A series of strategies, however, will help you get the best results. Think in terms of working and applying technique to relevant reflex areas until the problem subsides. For example, to deal with a cold, work the adrenal gland reflex areas when the sniffles appear and continue until they abate.

Alternatively you might prefer to set a time and place, such as working for five minutes at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. This will give your work the consistency that is key in getting results.

Another successful strategy is to get into the habit of applying reflexology technique whenever you have a few spare minutes. Talking on the telephone, stopping at a traffic light, or waiting for an appointment all offer opportunities that can be usefully employed: you will find that accumulated small chunks of time add up.



CAUTIONS

If you have a health problem, consult a physician before starting work: reflexology is an adjunct to medical care, not a substitute.

If you are pregnant, be aware of the specific cautions that apply (see pages 112–113).

When working with babies, children, or the elderly, work more frequently but with less pressure and for a shorter period of time.

When working the pancreas reflex area of individuals with diabetes or hypoglycemia, work only lightly and briefly to begin.

When working with someone who is severely ill, work only for brief periods of time, applying light pressure and be sure to stay within the recipient's comfort zone.

If a part of the hand feels sensitive to the touch after reflexology work, it may have been overworked. Let the area rest for a few days and when you begin work again, work for a shorter amount of time and with less pressure.

Do not overwork a reflex area that reflects an infected body part; for example, the lung reflex area of the hand in someone with bronchitis.

ADDRESSING HEALTH CONCERNS

DEAL WITH STRESS: Studies show that stress and tension contribute to the majority of health concerns. Make a point, therefore, of addressing such concerns with one of the following three strategies:

1. Give the hand a complete workout or, better still, have someone else do it: a workout from someone else is more relaxing than working on oneself.
2. Indulge your hands in a session of nothing but desserts (see pages 60–65 and 82–85).
3. Apply technique repeatedly to the solar plexus reflex area, especially at the beginning and end of a session.

“FEEL-GOOD” FACTOR: People often say “That feels good” during a workout. Take note of the area or dessert and remember to work with it more often in the future.

WORK WITHIN THE COMFORT ZONE: Remember that the primary aim of a workout is relaxation, so make sure you stay within a recipient's comfort zone.

DRINK WATER: It is important to drink lots of water after a workout, to help rid the body of toxins. Aid this by focusing on the kidney reflex area in the first few sessions.



STRESS

In the vast majority of health concerns, stress plays a contributory role. Reflexology, however, provides a safe and effective method of general stress control, as well as a means of easing the impact of stress on specific parts of your body. For general stress reduction, work on the solar plexus and the adrenal gland reflex areas (*see pages 16–17*), applying the technique for longer periods of time until you achieve relief.

RESEARCH

Researchers in Singapore have demonstrated that reflexology impacts on areas of the brain involved in relaxation. Using electro-encephalography (EEG) to record brain activity, they showed that the application of reflexology technique to the brain reflex area of the thumb produced brain activity consistent with relaxation.

Working the hands

Target the adrenal gland and solar plexus reflex areas for a general relaxation effect. When working the solar plexus reflex, enhance the effect by pressing and holding the pressure in place for a few seconds.

- 1 Clasp the recipient's wrist with your right hand to keep the hand steady. Pinch the webbing between thumb and finger, pressing repeatedly on the ADRENAL GLAND reflex area with the tip of the index finger.



- 2 To find the SOLAR PLEXUS reflex area, straighten the fingers of the right hand. Place the tip of your left index finger in the center of the fleshy palm, midway along the long bone below the thumb. Press repeatedly.



Self-help hand reflexology

The solar plexus and adrenal gland reflex areas are easily accessible, making this an easy and convenient stress-relieving technique that you can use anywhere, any time. Apply the technique as often as needed to obtain relief.

- 1 Locate the ADRENAL GLAND reflex area with the tip of your left index finger, midway along the long bone below the thumb. Press repeatedly with your index finger.



- 2 Gripping the hand between the thumb and index finger, press repeatedly on the SOLAR PLEXUS reflex area with the flat of the index finger.

OVERALL STRESS REDUCTION

One strategy for dealing with stress is to apply a general hand-relaxation technique: when your hands relax, your whole body relaxes, improving its response to stress as well as benefiting specific areas. Techniques include:

Paraffin bath (see page 53)

Using a foot-roller as a hand-roller

Hand-rolling techniques (spiky balls)

Applying golf-ball techniques



HEADACHES

Tension is often implicated in headaches, but it's worth experimenting with the sequences below to see what works best. The chart opposite recommends reflex areas and technique for different types of headache according to whether the problem is a migraine headache or pain in a particular part of the head.

RESEARCH

A Danish study in 1997 found that reflexology helped ease headaches. Most importantly, many participants came to think of "working on" their headaches rather than just "living with" them. The study concluded: "The patients see themselves as vital agents in the process of illness and of curing themselves."

Working the hands

Neck tension frequently contributes to headaches, and working the neck reflex areas may relieve this. Work both hands evenly, repeating the movements on each digit and thumb in turn. Seek out sensitive areas, as working on these can help to relieve pain and tension.

- 1 To relieve tension, work the NECK and HEAD reflex areas, using the walk-down/pull-against dessert (see page 64). The fingertips work against the thumb to create leverage and stretch the finger.

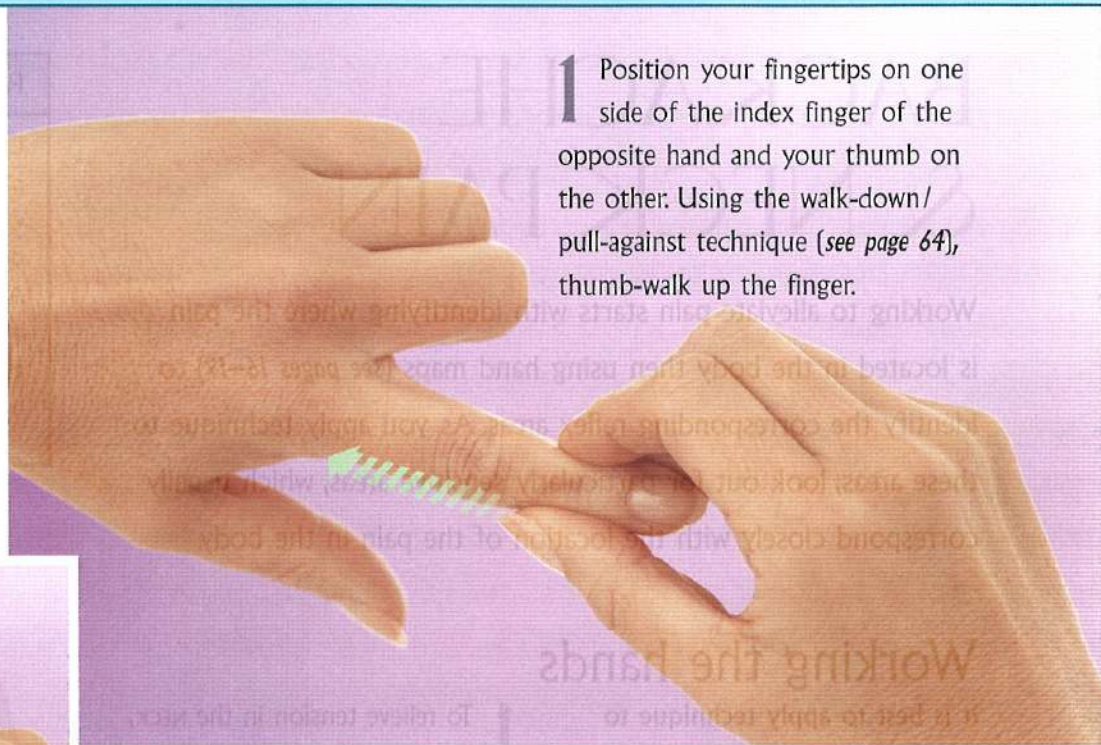


- 2 Work the HEAD, FACE, and SINUS reflex areas of the thumbs and fingers, focusing on the areas just below the nails.

- 3 Now apply the thumb-walking technique to work the HEAD and BRAIN reflex areas on the thumb and fingers.

Self-help hand reflexology

If you develop a headache, identify what type it is and where the pain is located. Check the chart below, which lists different types of headache, then apply the appropriate technique to the suggested reflex area.



1 Position your fingertips on one side of the index finger of the opposite hand and your thumb on the other. Using the walk-down/pull-against technique (see page 64), thumb-walk up the finger.



2 Reposition your hand and target the joint, thumb-walking down the side of the finger while stretching the inside edge. Repeat this sequence on each of the fingers in turn.



3 Holding your thumb as shown between thumb and index finger, exert pressure for several seconds. Repeat across the thumb, repositioning the working thumb and pressing the area below the nail.



4 Rest the thumb on the golf ball as shown. Roll the golf ball over the HEAD reflex area by rocking the hand back and forth. Repeat on the first segment of each finger of both hands.

TYPES OF HEADACHE

Depending on the nature of your headache and location of the pain, work the following reflex areas with the suggested techniques:

MIGRAINE HEADACHE: Thumb-walk along the SPINE reflex area.

MIGRAINE HEADACHE WITH VISION IMPAIRMENT: Walk-down/pull-against through the NECK reflex area on the index finger.

HEADACHE AT TOP OF HEAD: Work the HEAD reflex area on the first segment of the digits.

HEADACHE AT SIDE OF HEAD: Work the HEAD reflex on the sides of the thumb.

PAIN AT BACK OF HEAD: Thumb-walk the HEAD reflex area on the first segment of the thumb.

BACKACHE & NECK PAIN

Working to alleviate pain starts with identifying where the pain is located in the body then using hand maps (*see pages 16–19*) to identify the corresponding reflex areas. As you apply technique to these areas, look out for particularly sensitive areas, which usually correspond closely with the location of the pain in the body.

RESEARCH

Chinese researchers demonstrated pain reduction following reflexology work in those suffering from degeneration of cervical disks. Another study found that reflexology lessened pain in a group of 40 persons suffering from herniated lumbo-sacral disks.

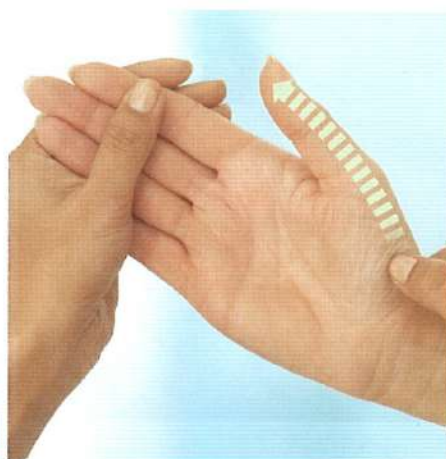
Working the hands

It is best to apply technique to a broad portion of the relevant reflex area. To work the spine reflex area, for example, make a series of passes to one side of the reflex area, followed by one down the center, and then one slightly to either side.

1 To relieve tension in the NECK, hold the thumb steady below the first joint with the holding hand, then apply the side-to-side technique (*see page 63*). Move the thumb several times then repeat the action on each finger.



2 Thumb-walk down the side of the index finger through the NECK reflex area. Make several passes over each joint then reposition and repeat on each finger in turn.



3 Hold the hand in place and thumb-walk up the SPINE reflex area, making several passes over a broad area of the thumb. Reposition the walking thumb as necessary.



4 Hold the fingers to steady the hand and apply the multiple finger-walking technique to the back of the hand. Cover the entire area with successive passes.

Self-help hand reflexology

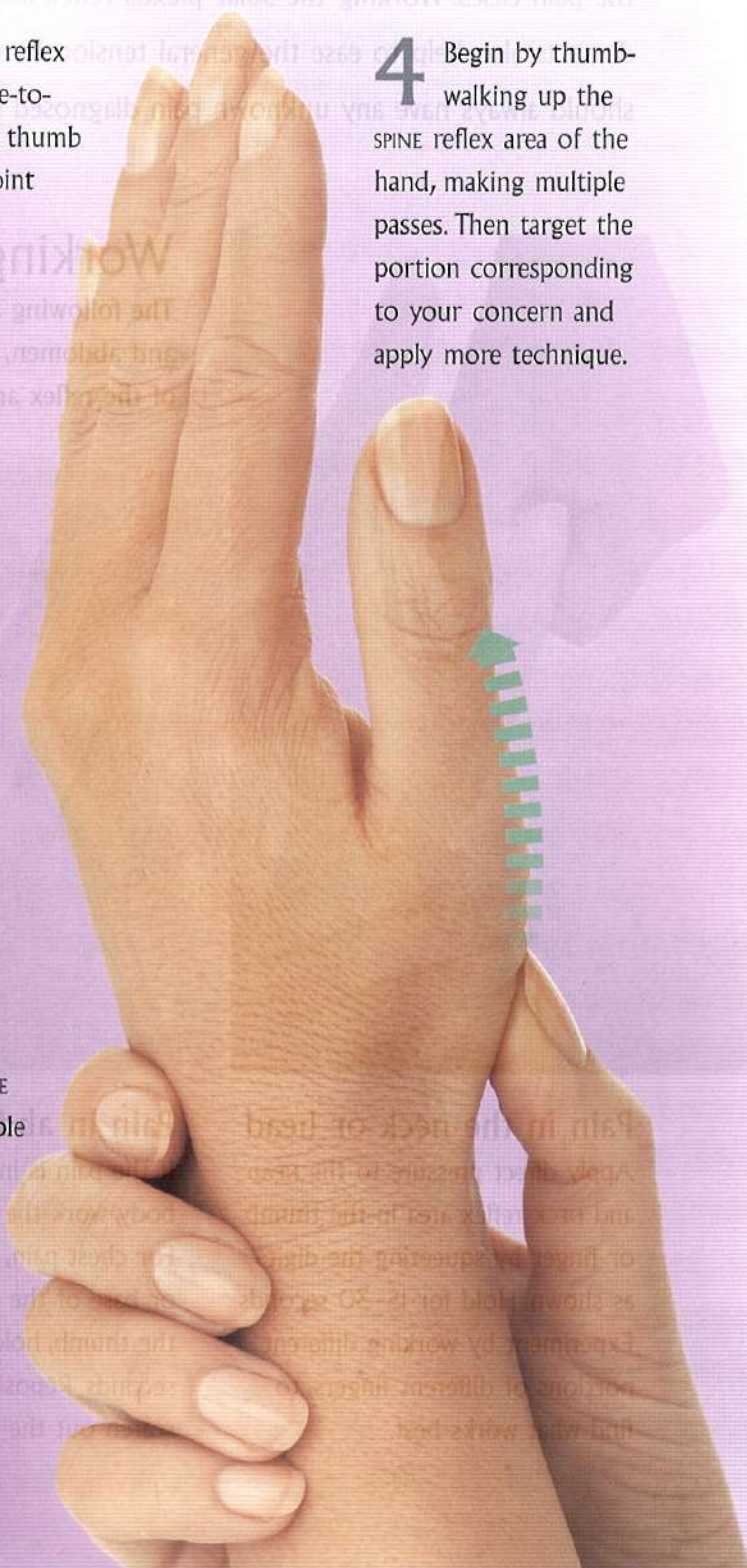
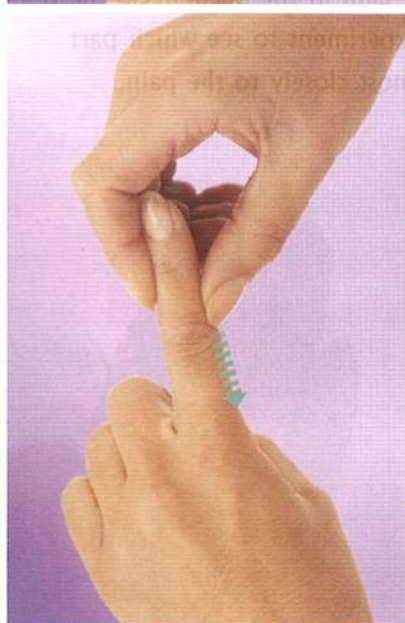
From the sequences below, choose the one that seems most appropriate to your particular back or neck pain. In time you will become more aware of which technique or particular reflex area works for you and you can then work discreetly on the area as frequently as you require.

1 To work the NECK reflex area, apply the side-to-side technique to the thumb joints, moving each joint several times. Repeat on the joints of the other fingers.

2 Continue work on the NECK reflex area. On the index finger, apply the walk-down/pull-against technique, making several passes, especially over the second joint. Repeat on the third joint (the knuckle of the hand). Repeat the work on each finger.

3 To target LOWER BACK, HIP, OR KNEE concerns, apply multiple finger-walking to the back of the hand, making several passes. Reposition the working hand closer to the wrist and repeat.

4 Begin by thumb-walking up the SPINE reflex area of the hand, making multiple passes. Then target the portion corresponding to your concern and apply more technique.



PAIN

In hand reflexology, pain is addressed by identifying the relevant reflex area, then applying a direct, steady, constant pressure until the pain eases. Working the solar plexus reflex and applying hand desserts also help to ease the general tension levels. However, you should always have any unknown pain diagnosed by your doctor.

RESEARCH

Numerous studies have shown that reflexology provides pain relief for cancer patients, the elderly, and patients recovering from surgery, as well as relieving headaches and toothache. Research has also shown that reflexology relieves pain in patients with kidney stones.

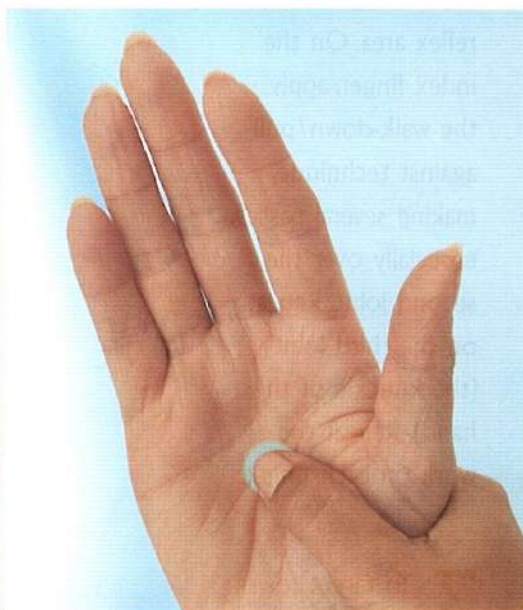
Working the hands

The following are suggestions for easing pain in the head, neck, chest, and abdomen, and for easing tension. Experiment to see which part of the reflex area being worked relates most closely to the pain.



Pain in the neck or head

Apply direct pressure to the HEAD and NECK reflex area in the thumb or finger by squeezing the digit as shown. Hold for 15–30 seconds. Experiment by working different portions of different fingers, to find what works best.



Pain in abdomen or chest

If the pain is in the trunk of the body, work the palm of the hand. For chest pain, work the upper palm or base of the thumb. Press with the thumb, holding for 15–30 seconds. Reposition your thumb to search out the most sensitive area.



To relieve tension

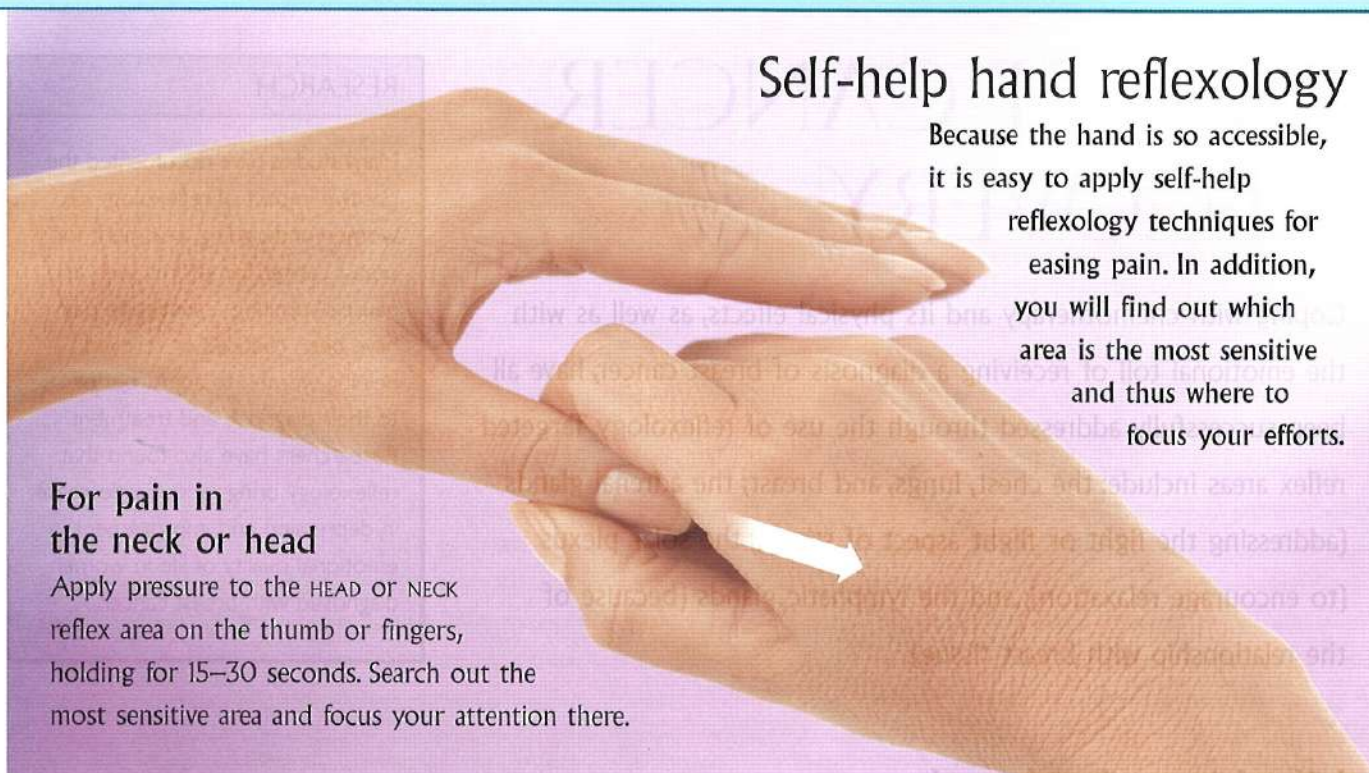
Place your thumb and fingertip in the webbing at the SOLAR PLEXUS reflex area. Press repeatedly, holding for 15–30 seconds. Reposition and work on another segment of the webbing, to relax the upper back. Search out the most sensitive area.

Self-help hand reflexology

Because the hand is so accessible, it is easy to apply self-help reflexology techniques for easing pain. In addition, you will find out which area is the most sensitive and thus where to focus your efforts.

For pain in the neck or head

Apply pressure to the HEAD OR NECK reflex area on the thumb or fingers, holding for 15–30 seconds. Search out the most sensitive area and focus your attention there.



WHERE DOES IT HURT?

Note the location of the pain then find the corresponding reflex area on the hand. Remember that the left side of the body is reflected on the left hand and the right side of the body on the right hand. The waistline is reflected at the base of the long bones of the hands (see page 39), while the reflex area corresponding to the tops of the shoulders is located at the base of the fingers. The thumb reflects the body's center line, while the outer aspect of the hand reflects the outer aspect of the body.



Pain in abdomen or chest

For pain in the trunk of the body, work the palm of the hand; for chest pain, work the upper palm or base of the thumb. Press with the thumb, holding for 15–30 seconds. Experiment until you find the most sensitive area.

To relieve tension

Place the thumb and fingertips in the webbing of the hand as shown above. Press together, holding for 15–30 seconds. Reposition the thumb and finger then again press for 15–30 seconds. Repeat the work throughout the webbing.

BREAST CANCER RECOVERY

Coping with chemotherapy and its physical effects, as well as with the emotional toll of receiving a diagnosis of breast cancer, have all been successfully addressed through the use of reflexology. Targeted reflex areas include: the chest, lungs, and breast; the adrenal glands (addressing the fight or flight aspect of stress); the solar plexus (to encourage relaxation); and the lymphatic glands (because of the relationship with breast tissue).

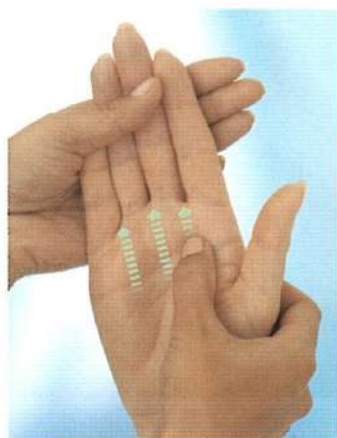
RESEARCH

Many studies have documented the positive impact of reflexology on women undergoing treatment for breast cancer. Symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, anxiety, and pain have been reduced or relieved, helping women to adjust better to their diagnosis and treatment. Researchers have also found that reflexology brings about a decrease in depression and improvement in emotional quality of life in women diagnosed with breast cancer.

Working the hands

The reflex areas for the chest, lungs, and breast and the solar plexus span the broad expanse of the upper palm, including the top of the hand. The adrenal

gland reflex area is a pinpoint, while the lymphatic gland reflex extends around the top of the wrist. Apply desserts frequently, as touch alone is important.



1 To work the CHEST, LUNG, BREAST, and SOLAR PLEXUS reflex areas, hold the fingers back and apply a series of passes through the upper palm.



2 Reposition the working hand to pinpoint the ADRENAL GLAND reflex area with the tip of the index finger and press repeatedly.



3 Turn the hand over and thumb-walk over the CHEST, LUNG, BREAST, and SOLAR PLEXUS reflex areas on the top of the hand.

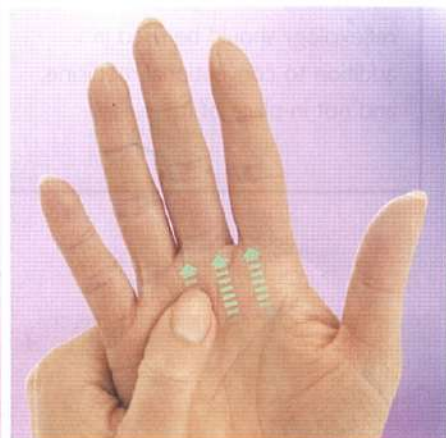


4 Holding the recipient's hand straight with the holding hand, start finger-walking through the LYMPHATIC GLAND reflex area around the wrist.

Self-help hand reflexology

While there are benefits to receiving hand reflexology from another person, research has shown that self-applied reflexology can also result in relaxation. As

well as the techniques shown below, consider using the general relaxation exercises (see pages 46–47) as well as self-help desserts (see pages 82–85).



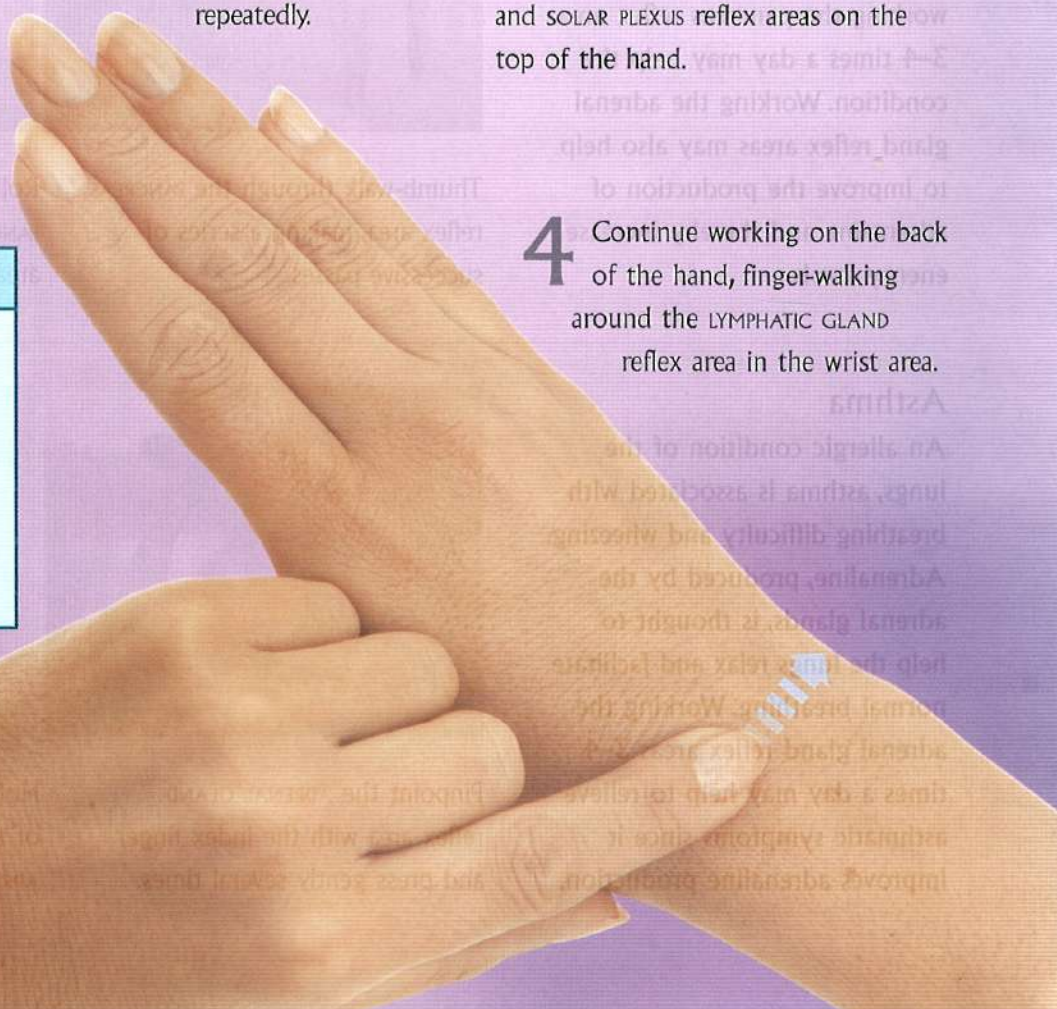
1 Hold your hand palm side up and thumb-walk in successive passes through the CHEST, LUNG, BREAST, and SOLAR PLEXUS reflex areas.



2 Locate the ADRENAL GLAND reflex area and press repeatedly.



3 Turn your hand over and thumb-walk down the CHEST, LUNG, BREAST and SOLAR PLEXUS reflex areas on the top of the hand.



4 Continue working on the back of the hand, finger-walking around the LYMPHATIC GLAND reflex area in the wrist area.

THE DESSERT SESSION

For the ultimate in relaxation, nothing beats a session of dessert techniques (see pages 60–65 and 82–85). Whether self-administered or applied by another, desserts relax the hands and address the recipient's overall tension pattern.

OTHER HEALTH CONCERNS

Unless otherwise stated, apply techniques 3–4 times a day, several minutes at a time, then switch hands. Every health concern listed in this section provides at least one self-help technique: these are denoted by a cross (✚) in the top right-hand corner of the picture.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

Although there is evidence that hand reflexology may ease the symptoms of some conditions, it should not be viewed as a cure. For serious health concerns, hand reflexology should be used in addition to conventional medicine, and not in place of it.

Low energy & fatigue

Reduced energy levels, especially late in the day, can be the result of low blood-sugar levels. Since the pancreas is involved in regulating blood-sugar levels, working the pancreas reflex area 3–4 times a day may help the condition. Working the adrenal gland reflex areas may also help to improve the production of adrenaline and thereby increase energy levels.



Thumb-walk through the PANCREAS reflex area, making a series of successive passes.



Roll a golf ball through the PANCREAS and ADRENAL GLAND reflex areas for 2 minutes.

Asthma

An allergic condition of the lungs, asthma is associated with breathing difficulty and wheezing. Adrenaline, produced by the adrenal glands, is thought to help the lungs relax and facilitate normal breathing. Working the adrenal gland reflex areas 3–4 times a day may help to relieve asthmatic symptoms since it improves adrenaline production.



Pinpoint the ADRENAL GLAND reflex area with the index finger and press gently several times.



Hold a golf ball between the heels of the hands. Roll it through the ADRENAL GLAND reflex areas.

Allergies & hay fever

Hay fever is an allergic response to pollen, but other allergies can be triggered by a variety of things. A common symptom of all allergies, however, is inflammation. Cortisol, a hormone secreted by the adrenal glands, may reduce levels of the chemical that causes inflammation. To ease allergic symptoms, work the adrenal gland reflex area 3–4 times a day.



Locate the ADRENAL GLAND reflex area and press gently several times. Repeat 3–4 times daily.



Rest a golf ball between the hands, as shown, and roll it through the ADRENAL GLAND reflex areas.

Sinus problems & headaches

Sinus problems and headaches are often the result of excess mucus clogging the sinus cavities. Working the adrenal gland reflex areas may help to relieve the symptoms associated with these conditions. In addition, you can also try the side-to-side dessert, which may help to unclog the sinus cavities and ease symptoms.



Gently press the ADRENAL GLAND reflex areas several times.



Roll a golf ball through the ADRENAL GLAND reflex areas for several minutes.



Grasp the sides of each finger joint and move it gently from side to side.

High blood pressure

Stress is a major contributing factor in high blood pressure, but targeted reflexology techniques may help to reduce stress levels. To help improve the body's stress response, target the reflex areas for the adrenal gland. Working the solar plexus reflex area will help to bring about a state of calm. Apply technique 3–4 times a day.



Thumb-walk through the ADRENAL GLAND reflex area, making several passes. Repeat throughout the day.



Pinch the SOLAR PLEXUS reflex area in the webbing of the thumb. Repeat several times during the day.

Anxiety & depression

At the very least, conditions such as anxiety and depression require relaxation. To induce a sense of calm, work the solar plexus reflex area. Target the pancreas reflex area to help stabilize the blood-sugar levels, and work the adrenal gland reflex areas to normalize adrenaline production.



Thumb-walk through the PANCREAS and ADRENAL GLAND reflex areas. Repeat 3–4 times each day.



Gently pinch the SOLAR PLEXUS reflex area, as shown, holding for several minutes. Repeat 3–4 times per day.

Heart problems

For heart conditions, work the heart reflex area, the adrenal gland reflex area (to improve adrenaline production), and the brain reflex area (parts of the brain regulate some of the heart's activities) 3–4 times a day.



Thumb-walk around the base of the thumb, making multiple passes to cover the HEART reflex area.



Grip a golf ball in your fingers. Roll it back and forth through the BRAIN reflex area.

Incontinence

The body's inability to control urination is known as incontinence. Since parts of the brain are involved in controlling this basic bodily function, working the brain reflex area may help to improve the condition.



Thumb-walk several times through the BRAIN reflex area on the edge of the thumb. Repeat on each digit.



Roll a golf ball through the BRAIN reflex area on the side of the index finger. Repeat on each digit.

Fluid retention

The kidneys are responsible for regulating the body's water needs and eliminating waste products. Reduced blood flow to the kidneys can result in fluid retention. Target the kidney reflex area to help ease fluid retention.



Thumb-walk through the KIDNEY reflex area, making several successive passes.



Rest a golf ball in the palm of the hand, just under the thumb, and roll through the KIDNEY reflex area.

Stroke

A stroke results from an interruption in the brain's blood supply (often as a result of a blood vessel rupture). Strokes can lead to paralysis, unconsciousness, and other problems. Apply technique for several minutes, 3–4 times a day, to the brain reflex area on the side of the body opposite the side that is paralyzed.



Hold the thumb steady as you thumb-walk through the BRAIN reflex area for several minutes.



Rest a golf ball in the BRAIN reflex area, and then roll the ball through the area for several minutes.

Dizziness & fever

Work the pituitary gland reflex area to help ease these health concerns. When experiencing dizziness (or fainting), apply technique until the feeling subsides. If, however, you are trying to reduce a fever, work the pituitary gland reflex area every hour.



Rest your fingertip on the PITUITARY GLAND reflex area. Press gently several times.



Find the PITUITARY GLAND reflex area on your fingertip, and then press the spot gently several times.

Stomachache

For a stomachache apply technique to the stomach reflex area until discomfort diminishes. If you are prone to having an upset stomach, work this reflex area several times a day as a preventive measure.



Hold the hand steady and thumb-walk throughout the STOMACH reflex area, making several passes.



Rest a golf ball between your hands. Roll it throughout the STOMACH reflex area.

Heartburn & hiatal hernia

To target heartburn and hiatal hernia concerns, work the solar plexus reflex area for several minutes 3–4 times a day. As you apply the thumb-walking or golf ball technique, concentrate on any sensitive areas.



Hold the hand up as shown and thumb-walk around the base of the thumb in successive passes.



Grip a golf ball in your fingers. Now, rest it at the base of the thumb and roll it around the area.

Diarrhea & diverticulitis

For these conditions, apply reflexology to the colon reflex area for several minutes, 3–4 times a day. This can also help ease the symptoms of colitis.



Work the COLON reflex area, making a succession of thumb-walking passes throughout the area.



Roll a golf ball through the COLON reflex area for several minutes. Repeat 3–4 times a day.

Diabetes & hypoglycemia (low blood sugar)

In some forms of diabetes the pancreas secretes too little insulin, a hormone that helps to metabolize sugar. For diabetes and hypoglycemia, work the pancreas reflex area and then the kidney reflex area to help eliminate toxins. **Note:** do not overwork the pancreas reflex area – apply pressure gently and briefly.



Holding the hand in place, thumb-walk several times throughout the PANCREAS reflex area.



Rest a golf ball between your hands, and roll it through the KIDNEY and PANCREAS reflex areas several times.

Menstrual cramps & PMS

To help relieve the discomfort of menstrual cramps or premenstrual syndrome (PMS), target the uterus reflex area. Apply technique to the area until discomfort subsides. If you are prone to PMS, work this reflex area several times a day as a preventive measure.



Rest your fingertip on the UTERUS reflex area and rotate the hand several times in both directions.



Place your fingertip on the UTERUS reflex area and rotate your wrist several times in both directions.

Insomnia

Tension is usually the culprit if you have trouble falling asleep and staying asleep. Use reflexology just before bedtime to relax. Apply technique to the solar plexus and neck reflex areas. Follow these exercises with a relaxing series of desserts (see pages 60–65 and 82–85).



Hold the hand in place and repeatedly thumb-walk through the SOLAR PLEXUS reflex area.



Apply the walk-down/pull-against to each digit to work the NECK reflex area, making several passes.