



THE HAND-REFLEXOLOGY SESSION

The following section will show you how to improve your health and keep your hands happy. From a tutorial on the basic techniques to a series of step-by-step sequences, we take you through the essentials of giving a hand-reflexology session. It includes not only a complete hands-on reflexology sequence and a self-help sequence, but also an extra workout featuring self-help tools.

PREPARING FOR A REFLEXOLOGY SESSION

As you prepare for a hand-reflexology workout, it is essential to take all the steps necessary to create a pleasant experience for both you and your recipient. You will improve the chances of achieving the relaxation goals of your work if you apply some forethought about providing a comfortable setting, body positioning, and all the practical aspects of applying technique to hands.

GETTING READY

Step one in preparing for a reflexology session is to make sure that your fingernails are of an appropriate length. The nails of the working finger and thumb should not make contact at any time with the skin of the hand on which you are working. In general, when looking at your fingernails, your fingertip should protrude only very slightly beyond your nail. Take care, however, not to cut your nails too short.

Look over your hands. If you see a cut or scratch in the skin, cover it with a dressing. You should always keep a supply nearby in case you need one for yourself or the recipient before you begin a session. The goal here is to avoid any risk of blood-to-blood contact.

You should always wash your hands before and after your reflexology sessions: this is a necessity since it assures the reflexology recipient of a pleasantly clean and hygienic session. It's a good habit to get into, even if you're just applying technique to yourself.

OPTIMUM POSITIONING

When preparing for a hand-reflexology session, you should remember that comfort is essential. Always aim to perform your reflexology work on a soft, but firm surface. This could comprise a pillow or a folded towel, whichever you prefer. Both are padded surfaces on which work can be done comfortably.

In an ideal situation, the recipient sits stretched back and relaxed in a recliner with a hand resting on a pillow or towel placed on the arm rest. The reflexologist sits alongside in another chair (preferably with wheels for easy repositioning). It is easiest if the reflexologist sits

Before starting your session, gather together any equipment you may need, such as pillow, towels, nail scissors or emery board, and hand lotion.



to the right-hand side of the recipient when applying work to the right hand and to the left-hand side of the client when applying work to the left hand. Reaching across the client to work on the opposite hand can be awkward and uncomfortable. Recipient and reflexologist may also sit face-to-face over a narrow table with the recipient's hand resting on a towel or pillow. Alternatively, you may sit side-by-side, with the recipient's hand placed on a folded towel or pillow resting on your knee.

OTHER ISSUES

When working with somebody's hands, consider yourself to be politely, yet firmly, in control of the hand to which you are applying technique. Be aware that working on another person's hands may be a little awkward at first. This is because of the perceptions about "hand-

To help tired hands relax, you might like to try some self-help aids such as a loofah or exfoliating mitt, rough towel, and vibrating massage wand.

holding" and the personal nature of touching someone else's hands. In order to proceed in a manner that is comfortable for both you and the recipient, you should aim to employ thoughtful "hand courtesy" before beginning the session.

Communication is key. Always tell the recipient when you are about to start or finish a reflexology session. Just before you begin a session, ask permission with a question such as "May I have your hand?" This serves as notification that the session is beginning. The phrase "I've finished – you may have your hand back" signals the end of a session. Should any interruption arise during the session, the same beginning and ending phrases may be used.

Maintaining physical contact during a reflexology session is also important. As you move from technique to technique, use the holding hand to maintain contact with the hand being worked. Such contact adds a smoothness and continuous level of comfort to the workout. In addition, it will be more convenient if the individual removes any rings, bracelet, or a watch that may interfere with your work. Have a bowl or basket available in which to place jewelry during the session.

BEGINNING THE SESSION

At the start of your work, ask the client if any part of the hand is injured or should be avoided. Older clients may complain of painful, enlarged, or arthritic finger joints. Approach conditions like this with caution.



Always begin and end your session with a series of desserts. This ensures some warm-up time for the hand, and provides a pleasant ending. Stay in touch with the individual as you apply techniques, bearing in mind that tastes vary. Some people favor a light touch applied to their hands while others like a vigorous workout. It's a good idea to ask the recipient what he or she prefers.

You should also make sure you work within the recipient's comfort zone by asking him or her how it feels. You could initiate the session by asking "will you tell me if the pressure is too much?" Bear in mind that there is a difference between "it hurts good" (which people really do say) and "it hurts."

A thorough hand reflexology workout may last 30–45 minutes. In the beginning, however, you might consider starting with shorter sessions. Mini-workouts

are a good starting point for building hand strength. As your thumb and hands get stronger, you can build up to a full 45 minutes.

TARGETING HEALTH CONCERNS

After you've worked through the hand, it's time to consider other areas of emphasis: these are areas that need extra attention. To choose such areas, consider what it is you would like to achieve. If you have a specific health problem or hand disorder that needs addressing, turn to Chapter 5 and choose either Reflexology to Target Health Concerns (*see pages 122–139*) or Reflexology to Target Hand Concerns (*see pages 140–153*). Locate your specific health or hand concern in order to find helpful reflexology techniques. Alternatively, consult the reflexology charts (*see pages 16–19*). Apply a series of desserts again after working specific areas.

Now move on to the other hand, where you'll repeat the above. When you've finished your work with the second hand, it's time for a closing series of desserts.

KEY TO TECHNIQUE SYMBOLS

Finger-walking



Thumb-walking



Hook & back-up



Squeeze



Pressure



Traction, pulling, pushing,
or side-to-side



Rotation or rotation
on a point



Twist



Palm-rocker



TIPS FOR AVOIDING TIREDNESS

TIME: Give yourself time to learn: just as when acquiring any skill, practice and time are needed.

POSITION: Make sure you have a comfortable working position that does not put unnecessary stresses and strains on your body.

TECHNIQUE: Review your technique application – done properly, your hands should not tire too easily.

STRENGTH: Practice self-help reflexology (*see pages 86–101*) to help build your strength.

DESSERTS: Take a tip from the professionals and break up your work with "desserts" (*see pages 82–85*), since these provide a chance for your working thumb or finger to have a rest.

CHANGE HANDS: Swap working hands regularly – if one thumb tires, adapt and apply technique with your other thumb.



Soothe away aches and pains and give tired hands a treat by immersing them in the moisturizing warmth of a paraffin-wax bath.



RELAXING HANDS

Busy hands deserve a properly thought-out relaxation plan. Choose from the following ideas:

Sit quietly, resting your hands, perhaps in warm water.

Invest in a self-help tool such as an electric vibrating wand or a paraffin-wax bath.

Roll a foot-roller over your hand to provide general relaxation. Or, for an instant relaxation effect, rub vigorously with a loofah or coarse, exfoliating mitt.

Apply hands-on reflexology technique and desserts, targeting specific areas of concern.

Using a paraffin bath adds an extra, relaxing element to your reflexology session. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions and, when you first start to use it, be aware of your response.



TECHNIQUES

In this section we describe four basic reflexology techniques: thumb-walking and finger-walking allow the application of pressure to a broad area of the hand, while the hook and back-up technique and rotating on a point both target reflex points deep in the fleshy parts of the hand. Practice these techniques on your own hand or forearm to help you build up your strength and skills.

Thumb-walking

The most efficient and effective technique in hand reflexology, thumb-walking applies a constant, steady pressure over the area being worked. As with any skill, it takes time to become proficient so practice on yourself till you perfect your technique. If your thumb becomes tired as you're learning, rest, change hands, or apply desserts (see pages 82–85).

LEARNING TIP

To find the proper angle of your thumb for thumb-walking, lay your hand down on a table. Note how the thumb rests on the table: the outer edge making contact with the table is the part of the thumb that should make contact with the hand being worked on. This angle makes the most of the leverage available from the four fingers.



Practicing the technique

The basis for the thumb-walking technique is the bending and unbending of the first joint of the

thumb. The goal is to take small “bites,” creating a feeling of steady pressure as you inch forward.



1 To practice the thumb action of this technique, hold the thumb below the first joint to prevent movement of the second joint. Now bend and straighten the first joint several times.



2 Still holding your thumb, position its outer edge on your leg. Bend and straighten the thumb several times, noting the pressure on your leg. Rock the thumb a little from the tip to the lower edge of the nail.



3 Remove the holding hand from your thumb and “walk” the thumb forward. Do not push it forward: bending and unbending are the sole means by which the thumb moves forward.



4 To practice using leverage, place the fingers and thumb of your right hand on your forearm. Working together, these provide the leverage necessary to create pressure.



5 Lower the wrist of your working arm so that the thumb exerts pressure on the arm. This pressure is directed through the thumb, but actually results from the actions of the fingers, hand, and forearm.



6 Now bend and unbend your thumb, taking a little step forward with each “unbend.” Continue practicing on your forearm until you produce a constant, steady pressure.

Applying the technique

Before thumb-walking on the palmar surface of the hand, first create a smooth, even surface on which to work. Stretch out the palm of the hand with the holding hand, as shown.



1 With the holding hand, stretch out the hand to be worked on. Place your thumb on the palm then drop your wrist to create leverage – this has the effect of exerting pressure with the thumb.



2 Keeping the hand in position, thumb-walk down the palm by bending and unbending the thumb. Reposition the thumb and thumb-walk down a different part of the hand.

COMMON MISTAKES



A frequent mistake when learning the thumb-walking technique is to overly bend the first joint of the thumb, resulting in stress to the thumb and possibly to the whole hand. It may also cause the thumb nail to dig into the skin. Another common error is to bend the second joint of the thumb instead of the first, again overworking the thumb and causing strain.

Finger-walking

Like the thumb-walking technique, finger-walking uses the bending and unbending of the first joint of the finger to “walk” over an area of the hand. The technique is well suited to working on the thinner skin on the top and sides of the hand. Multiple finger-walking feels good and has the advantage of working a broad area of the hand.

LEARNING TIP

Beginners often find that the finger “learns” this technique on its own, seemingly from the previously acquired skill of thumb-walking. As with thumb-walking, the finger must always move in a forward direction – never backward or sideways. The top of the hand is a good practice ground for finger-walking.

Practicing the technique

The “walking” motion of this technique is produced by a slight rocking action from the fingertip to the edge of the fingernail.



1 To practice the finger-walking movement, hold the index finger below the first knuckle to isolate the joint used in the technique. Practice bending and unbending the first joint of the index finger.

2 Using the same movement, “walk” the index finger up the back of the hand by bending and unbending the first joint, rocking the fingertip to the lower edge of the fingernail and back.

3 Use the finger and thumb in opposition to create leverage while finger-walking. To begin practicing, place the fingers on the forearm and the thumb underneath.

4 Raise the wrist as you hold on with the thumb and press the fingers into the forearm. Note the increased pressure that is now exerted by the fingers. Maintaining this pressure, “walk” the index finger forward, across the forearm.



Applying the technique

As with thumb-walking, finger-walking requires the hand that is being worked on to be held steady by the holding hand, providing a stationary surface.

1 Hold the hand steady with the holding hand as shown. Place the tip of the index finger on the back of the hand and start finger-walking forward toward the wrist.



2 To practice multiple finger-walking, place the working fingers on top of the hand with the thumb resting at the wrist underneath. Now, bend and unbend the first joints of all four fingers as you “walk” them forward.

COMMON MISTAKES

Overbending the index finger is one of the most common mistakes when practicing the finger-walking technique. Keep your index finger parallel to the hand, bending and unbending the first joint as you inch forward. Other mistakes include moving your whole hand rather than just the first joint; digging the fingernail into the skin; and rolling the finger from side to side.



Hook & back-up

This technique is used to work a specific reflex point, rather than to cover a large area as in thumb-walking and finger-walking (see pages 54–57). It is a relatively stationary technique, with the working finger making only very small movements.

LEARNING TIP

Practice locating specific deep reflex points by searching out particularly sensitive areas.

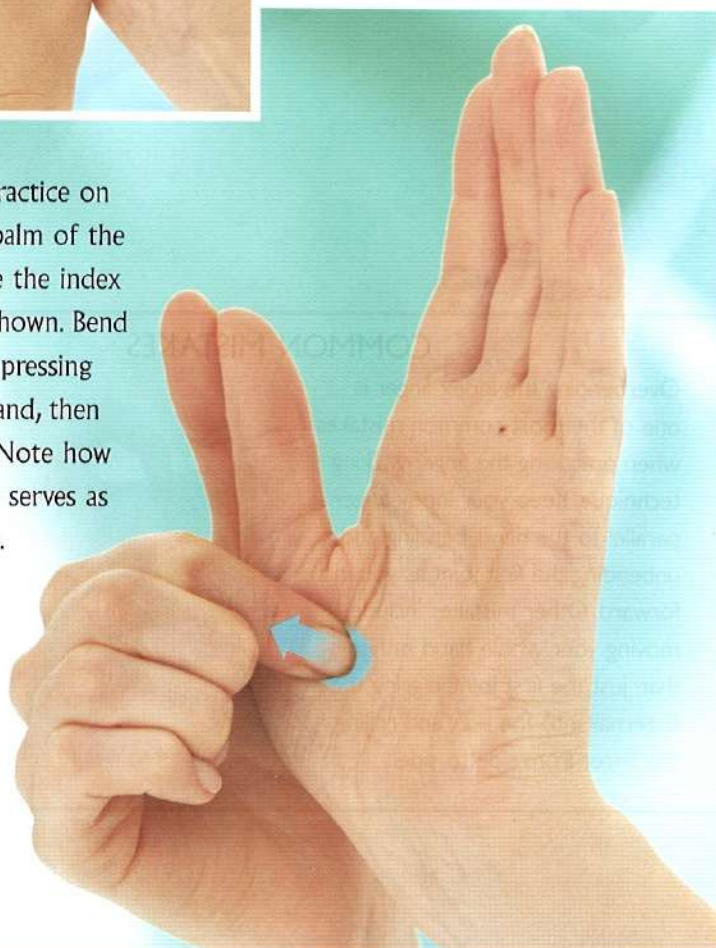
Practicing the technique

Leverage is important in applying deeper pressure – here, the palm of your hand provides a backstop for the pressure being applied by the index finger. It is important that deep pressure is applied to the correct area: sensitivity is an indicator that you're on the right spot.



1 Grasp the hand with the tip of the index finger resting at the center of the thumb. Bend the finger to press into the thumb, then pull back to exert pressure. Brace the thumb against the thumb of the working hand.

2 To practice on the palm of the hand, place the index finger as shown. Bend the finger, pressing into the hand, then pull back. Note how the thumb serves as a backstop.



Applying the technique

Keep the hand steady with the holding hand as the technique is applied. If the fingers curl forward impeding access, hold them back.



1 Place the tip of the index finger in the center of the thumb, curl the finger, and exert pressure on the PITUITARY reflex area.



2 Move the tip of your index finger to the ADRENAL GLAND reflex area in the fleshy part of the thumb, and exert pressure.

Rotating on a point

This technique is used to work the bonier parts of the wrist. The index finger pinpoints the reflex area, while the holding hand moves the recipient's hand first in a clockwise and then in a counter-clockwise direction.



1 Rest the tip of your index finger on the top of the wrist, in the hollow at the base of the index finger, as shown. Grasp the fingers with your holding hand, as shown, and move the hand first in a clockwise and then in a counter-clockwise direction.

LEARNING TIP

Keep a relaxed but firm grip on the recipient's fingers with the holding hand, taking care not to pinch the fingers together. As you rotate the hand, imagine you're drawing a circle in the air with the tips of the fingers.

2 Reposition your index finger on the wrist, in the hollow at the base of the ring finger, and repeat the technique, rotating the hand first in a clockwise and then in a counter-clockwise direction.

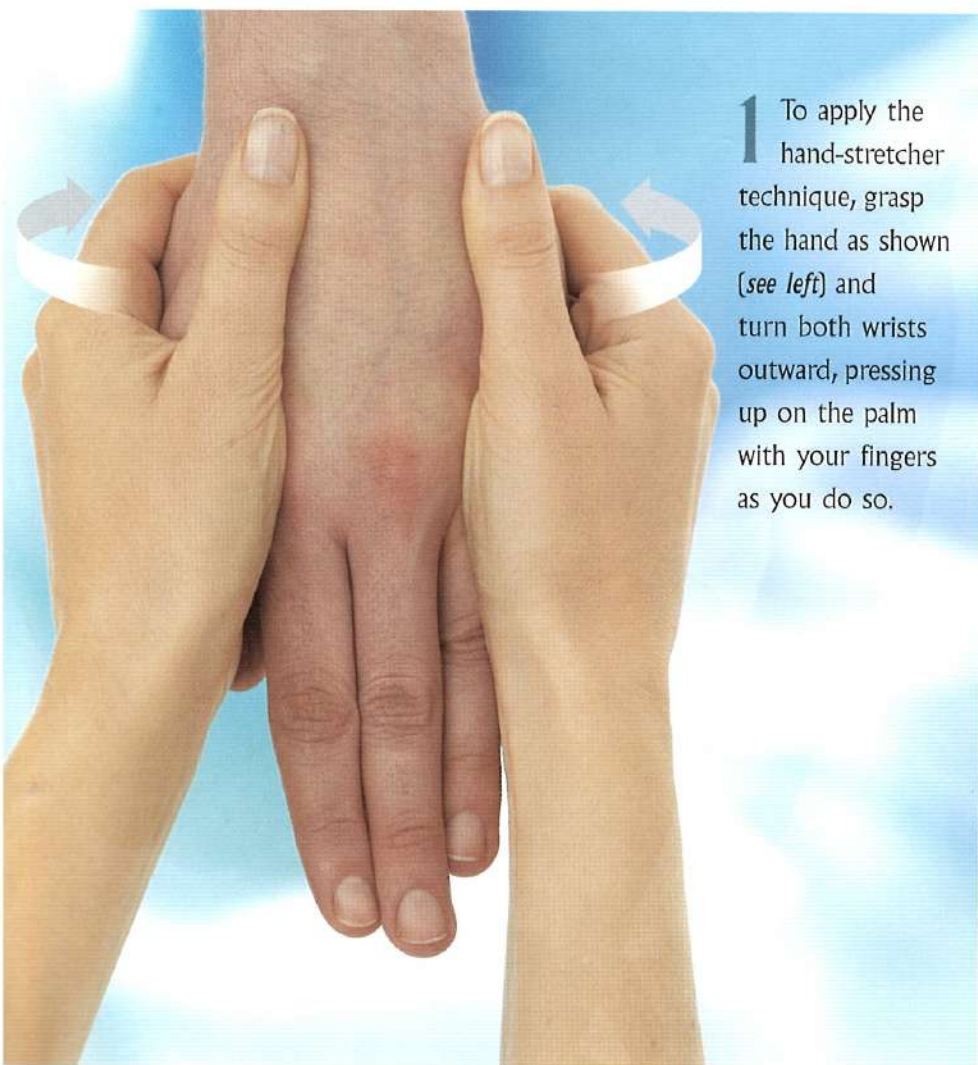


HAND DESSERTS

The desserts described on the following pages are techniques that relax the hand through stretch and movement, as well as exploring its flexibility and range of movement. They may serve as a soothing interlude aimed solely at relaxation; or they can be used as part of a session — at the beginning and end, and as a transition between steps in a sequence. Be careful not to over-apply hand desserts, moving the finger joints more than they can comfortably absorb. If relaxation is the goal of the session, keep your actions slow and easy.

LEARNING TIP

Desserts target joints of the hand, which, in turn, represent joints in the body. To get an idea of which joints you are working in a dessert, look at the anatomical map of the bones of the hand (see page 39). Full contact with the hand ensures the best desserts: during the finger-pull technique (see page 63), for example, enclose the thumb or finger being worked on within the entire working hand.



1 To apply the hand-stretcher technique, grasp the hand as shown (see left) and turn both wrists outward, pressing up on the palm with your fingers as you do so.

Hand-stretcher

This dessert relaxes the body of the hand, helping to break up stress patterns that have been set up during the day. Proceed gradually and gently as you move the hand, pausing between the upward and downward stretches.



2 Now turn your wrists inward as you press the top of the hand with your palms. Repeat these two actions alternately several times.

Palm-rocker

This dessert is most effective when applied rhythmically, relaxing the hand as well as preparing it for further work. Movement is created between the long bones of the hand by moving them back and forth alternately. Be careful not to over-apply this dessert.

LEARNING TIP

A variation of this dessert is to move the fingers straight forward and back rather than in a circular movement. The technique is applied by the flats of the fingers resting on top of the hand.



1 Clasp the hand as shown, with the flats of the fingers along the long bone of the index finger. Push toward the fingers with the right hand while you pull toward the wrist with the left.

2 Reverse the action, pushing with the left hand and pulling with the right. Alternate the two movements several times.



Palm-mover

This dessert promotes flexibility and relaxation of the whole hand by gently moving the long bones. Repeat the dessert several times on the long bone of each finger.



1 Press gently along the long bone of the index finger, while pulling up with the thumb to create counter-movement. Repeat on the long bone of the middle finger.



2 Move on to the long bone of the ring finger, pressing with the fingers and pulling up with the thumb. Repeat the sequence on the long bone of the little finger.

Palm counter-mover

Using a movement in counter-direction to that of the palm-mover, this technique provides another way of creating movement between the long bones of the hand. In this case, the flat of the thumb rests on top of the hand, providing padding for the bony surface as it is pushed downward, while the fingers pull up from below.



1 Rest your working thumb on the knuckle of the index finger. Push downward with the thumb and pull up with the working hand to turn the outside of the hand upward. Release and repeat several times.

LEARNING TIP

Practice this technique on your own hand to see how it feels. Press down on the knuckle of the index finger and hold for several seconds. Repeat on each knuckle of both hands, comparing tension levels.



2 Moving the thumb to each of the knuckles in turn, repeat the movement several times, pushing down with the thumb and pulling up with the fingers.

Finger side-to-side

In this hand-dessert technique, the finger joints are moved in a way that is different from normal. While the holding hand keeps the finger steady and the upper joints static, the working hand creates a slight side-to-side movement at the joint that is being worked on.

LEARNING TIP

Increase movement in the finger joint gradually, always keeping within the recipient's comfort zone. Maintain a smooth, steady, rhythmic movement to create the greatest relaxation.



1 To work on the index finger, hold it static at the middle joint with the holding hand. Grasp the fingertip between the index finger and thumb and move the first joint from side to side.



2 Repeat the side-to-side movement of the index finger several times, then move on and apply to each digit in turn.

Finger-pull

This technique provides an easy way to relax the whole hand. The gentle pull loosens the finger joints, relieving the compression that can occur as a result of routine tasks such as keyboarding.

LEARNING TIP

Wrap your fingers around the digit being worked, making full contact; a firm, even pressure creates the most relaxing effect. As you pull the finger, remember to create a counter-pull with the holding hand.



1 Grip the wrist with the holding hand. Grasp the thumb and pull it slowly and steadily toward you while pulling gently in the opposite direction with the holding hand.



2 Continue gripping the wrist with the holding hand and repeat the pulling action on the index finger; then on each of the other fingers and thumb in turn.

Walk-down / pull-against

This technique applies both pressure and stretch to encourage flexibility of the fingers. Bending the finger slightly beyond its normal range of movement enhances the digit's mobility.

LEARNING TIP

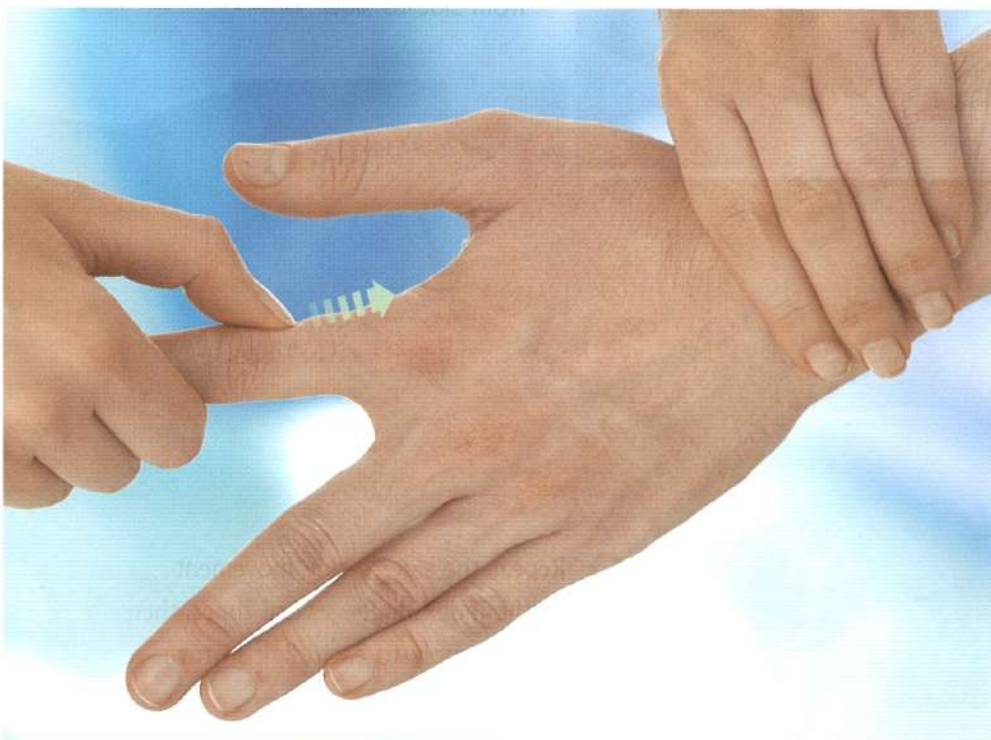
The walk-down/pull-against technique is best applied with leverage for the walking thumb. Drop your wrist to create leverage, allowing your fingertips to work against the thumb tip.

1 Use the holding hand to grasp the wrist of the hand to be worked. Then position the working thumb and fingers (*see left*). Now thumb-walk down the side of the finger, while stretching the inside of the finger. Make several passes.

2 Move on to the middle finger and thumb-walk down the side of the finger while stretching the inside edge. Repeat the sequence on each digit. Focus particularly on the joints.



3 Once you've walked down the sides of the fingers, walk down the topside of each finger.



The squeeze

This is a simple, yet effective, technique that relaxes the whole hand from the fingertips to the wrist. Although the pictures below show the technique

being applied to the whole hand, it can be used on the fingers individually, one at a time. Use a firm but gentle grasp when applying this hand dessert.



1 Using the holding hand, grasp the wrist to hold the hand steady. Now wrap your working hand around the base of the hand, near the wrist and gently, but firmly, squeeze the hand.

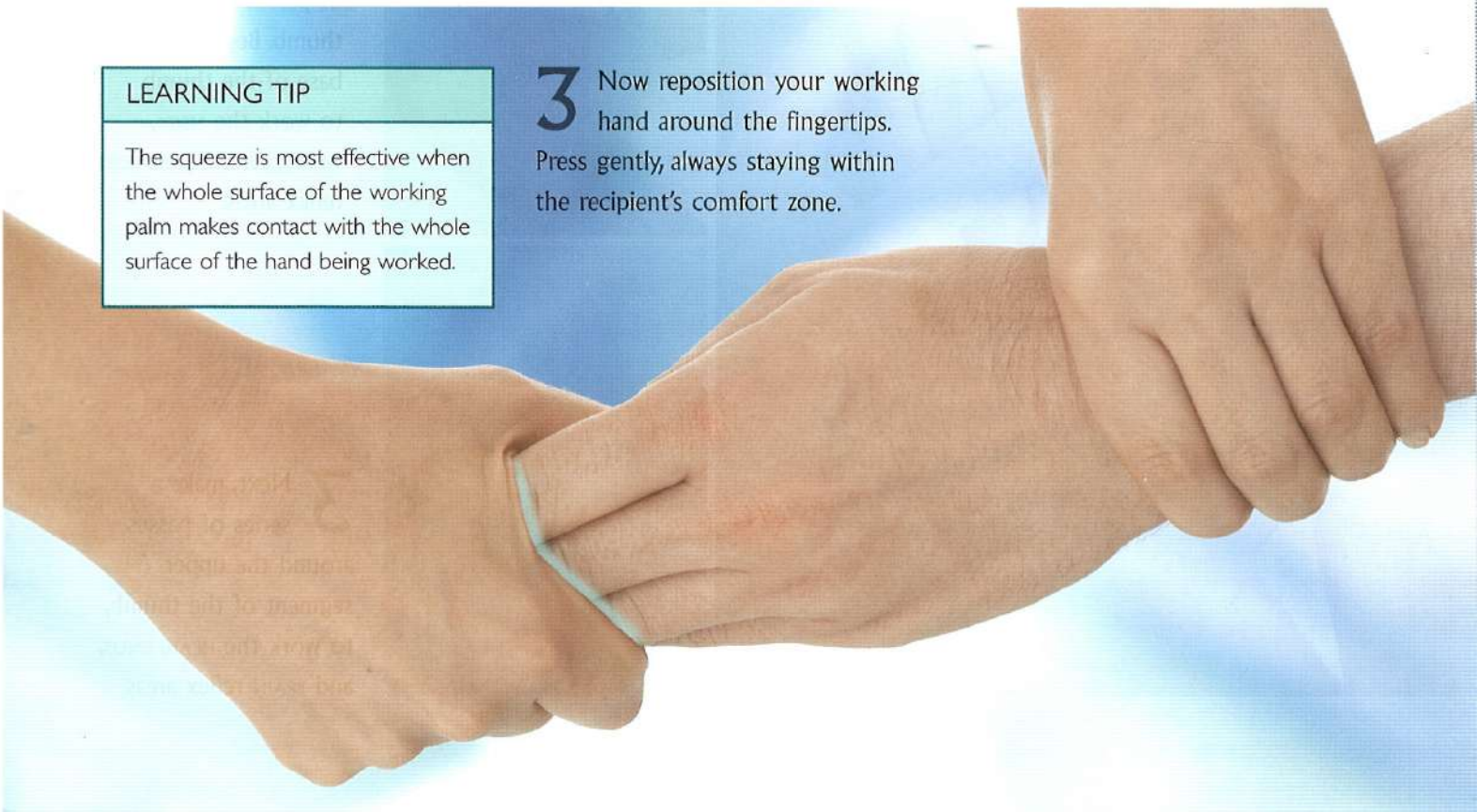


2 Reposition your working hand, now grasping the hand around the area of the knuckles. Again firmly apply pressure, squeezing the hand. Be careful not to squeeze the fingers together too hard.

LEARNING TIP

The squeeze is most effective when the whole surface of the working palm makes contact with the whole surface of the hand being worked.

3 Now reposition your working hand around the fingertips. Press gently, always staying within the recipient's comfort zone.



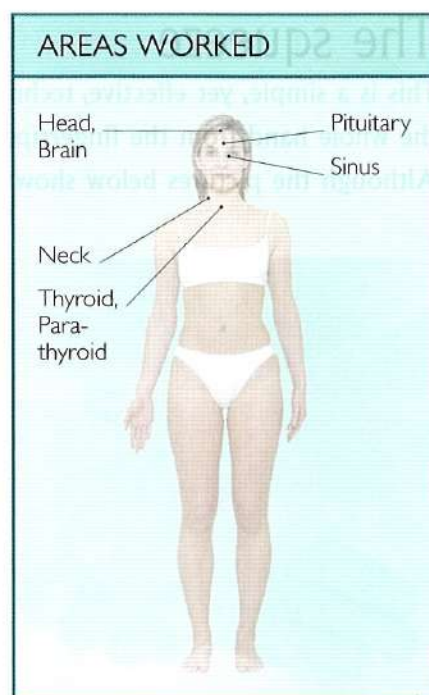
STEP 1

Working the fingers and the thumb

The areas worked in this sequence – the brain, pituitary, thyroid, and parathyroid – control many of the body's vital functions. As you work through the sequence, you'll be relaxing, stimulating, and enhancing the functioning of those organs as well as producing an overall respite from stress as the muscles relax. This, in turn, has a beneficial effect on the homeostatic balance of the body.

DESSERTS

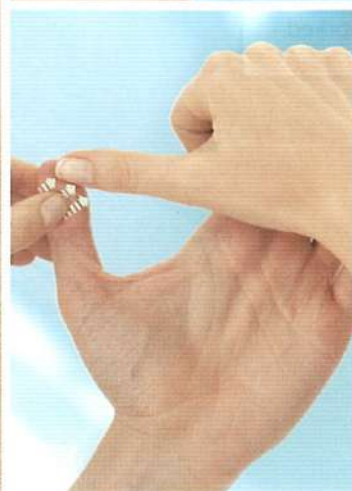
Hand-stretcher (p. 60) • Palm-rocker (p. 61) • Palm-mover (p. 62)
Palm counter-mover (p. 62) • Finger side-to-side (p. 63)
Finger-pull (p. 63) • Walk-down/pull-against (p. 64)



1 To work the PITUITARY reflex area, hold the hand steady and rest the thumb against the working hand. Press the reflex area repeatedly with the index finger.



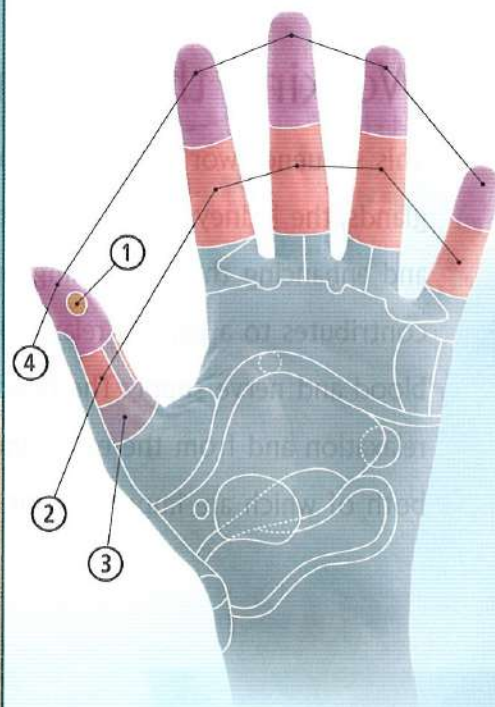
2 Reposition the holding hand and use the thumb-walking technique to apply a succession of passes across the thumb. Begin at the base of the thumb to work the NECK, THYROID, and PARATHYROID reflex areas.



3 Next, make a series of passes around the upper segment of the thumb, to work the HEAD, SINUS, and BRAIN reflex areas.

4 Straighten the hand, then thumb-walk across the NECK, HEAD, SINUS, and BRAIN reflex areas of the index finger. Repeat on the other fingers.

HAND ORIENTATION



LEFT HAND

By working reflex areas on the fingers and thumb, this sequence targets structures in the head and neck.

The first segment of the thumb reflects the left half of the head, including all layers – from the surface of the skin to the deepest recesses of the brain. The PITUITARY GLAND (1) is represented in the center of the first segment. Reflex areas of the thumb's second segment correspond to the NECK (2) and THYROID and PARATHYROID GLANDS (3). The first segment of each finger represents a portion of the HEAD, BRAIN, and SINUSES (4). The next segment and half of the third segment relate to the base of the NECK. The reflex areas of the right hand mirror those of the left hand.

5 Now thumb-walk down the index finger and then the middle finger.

6 Go on to the ring finger and thumb-walk throughout the NECK, HEAD, SINUS, and BRAIN reflex areas.

7 Change hands and complete the coverage by thumb-walking down the little finger.

DESSERTS

Finger-pull (p. 63) • Walk-down/pull-against (p. 64)
Palm-rocker (p. 61)