

# BENEFITS OF REFLEXOLOGY

Everyone can benefit enormously from reflexology.

Whether you visit a professional, practice on yourself, or have a friend apply the techniques, studies cited in this chapter suggest that reflexology can help relax you, alleviate symptoms of certain disorders, and generally improve your quality of life. As well as explaining the benefits of reflexology, this chapter also answers the most frequently asked questions, tells you how to choose a professional reflexologist, and outlines what to expect during a consultation.



# WHY DO PEOPLE USE REFLEXOLOGY?

Of the many reasons for choosing this therapy, most people come to reflexology work because it offers a safe, effective, natural, easily available, and simple-to-use treatment option for a variety of health problems. Some are attracted to the therapy because it is noninvasive and drug-free; others like the fact that it is easy to learn and to apply—self-help work can be carried out anywhere and anytime. Worldwide, people are discovering that reflexology may help treat the root causes of many health concerns, ease day-to-day stresses, and relieve the impact of past injury or illness. It also presents a gentle opportunity to offer the gift of touch, to reach out and show a loved one you care.

A common thread among these benefits is the opportunity that reflexology offers for easing stress, which is thought to be a major factor in 80 percent of illness and a contributing factor in the other 20 percent. Applying pressure to the hands and feet simultaneously elicits general relaxation while also relaxing a targeted area. Stress researcher Hans Selye [1907–82] noted in 1956 that it is not simply stress

itself, but prolonged exposure to stress, that causes wear and tear to the body. Reflex work breaks up patterns of repeated stress by treating the body to an experience apart from the mundane and everyday. One application interrupts stress; further sessions condition change to take place; and ongoing application teaches the body to operate more effectively.

Reflexology offers an opportunity to take a break from the stress of everyday life. Putting one's feet up and taking a few minutes out is effective in itself—aching hands and feet make everyday life miserable—but reflexology techniques amplify these effects.

Injury to any part of the body stresses the whole system. Pain is a stressor. Reflexology, however, releases endorphins, the body's natural pain-relieving chemicals. It also helps the body to adapt to injury. An injured shoulder, for example, prompts the whole body to hold itself differently. As reflexology de-stresses the entire body with the injured shoulder, it allows the best possible accommodation of injury. Post-injury reflex therapy encourages flexibility and motion. It exercises the building blocks of dexterity and walking, enabling muscles, tendons, ligaments, and joints to use their full range of movement, and ensuring maximum mobility through into old age.

## WHY CHOOSE REFLEXOLOGY?

It offers a natural, drug-free treatment option for a variety of health problems

Reflexology can be used to aid recovery from injury, particularly injury to the feet or hands

It offers a nonintrusive way of expressing love or care for someone, benefiting the giver and recipient alike

It helps to ease overused, tired feet and hands

The therapy can be used to reduce pain

Reflexology helps to maintain manual dexterity and locomotive abilities

The therapy can be used to maintain good health in a preventive way

Reflexology promotes general relaxation

It releases endorphins, the body's "feel-good" chemicals



## Your questions answered

### Can reflexology help me with my health problem?

This is an impossible question to answer. There are many factors involved in healing, such as how long you've had the ailment, how severe the problem is, and whether or not you have other health issues.

That said, however, in our reflexology work we have often been amazed at the ability of the therapy to resolve health concerns. It's worth giving reflexology a try: whether you solve the problem or not, you are helping by taking positive steps to look after your health.

### Which is more effective, hand reflexology or foot reflexology?

This is a matter of ongoing debate. Some people enjoy work on their hands, while others prefer to have the feet manipulated. Occupation can play a role in preferences: those who stand or walk all day tend to enjoy foot-work, while someone who spends time at a keyboard may prefer hand-work. Generally, foot reflexology is considered more effective because the foot is more sensitive for being encased in shoes all day. One could also argue that the feet play a more vital role in survival and are, thus, more directly wired by the nervous system to

There are benefits to both hand and foot reflexology: foot-work is generally considered more effective as the feet are often highly sensitive, but hand work has its own distinct advantages.

Whether you solve your health problem or not, you can gain positive support from knowing you are taking active steps to look after your health.

respond to the application of pressure techniques. The hands do, however, have unique qualities that give them their own distinct advantages: the hand is more readily accessible for self-help techniques and so may be a more effective place to apply pressure techniques simply because one is able to apply them more often. For those seeking to regain function of the hands or to maintain an independent lifestyle, hand reflexology work more effectively helps maintain or regain the ability to button, zip, and manipulate objects.

### Which is better, self-help or having someone else working on me?

The advantage of having someone else work on you is that you get to sit back and relax, and so gain an increased feeling of relaxation. Self-help work, however, is convenient for frequent reflexology applications, which may be necessary if your goal is to ameliorate a chronic health concern.

### Can I hurt myself?

Reflexology is very, very safe. But, like any activity involving the body, if pushed to the extreme, excessive pressure could cause bruising. There may also be an overall body response to reflexology work (a sensation of flu-like symptoms, such as achiness and tiredness) as the body attempts to release accumulated toxins. This should pass within one hour.



# REFLEXOLOGY FOR EVERYONE

Whatever your occupation, age, or current state of health, reflexology has something to offer you. For all stages of life, this healing therapy aims to help your body to maintain health, enhance your quality of life, meet specific health needs, and relieve stress in a very pleasant way.

## BABIES

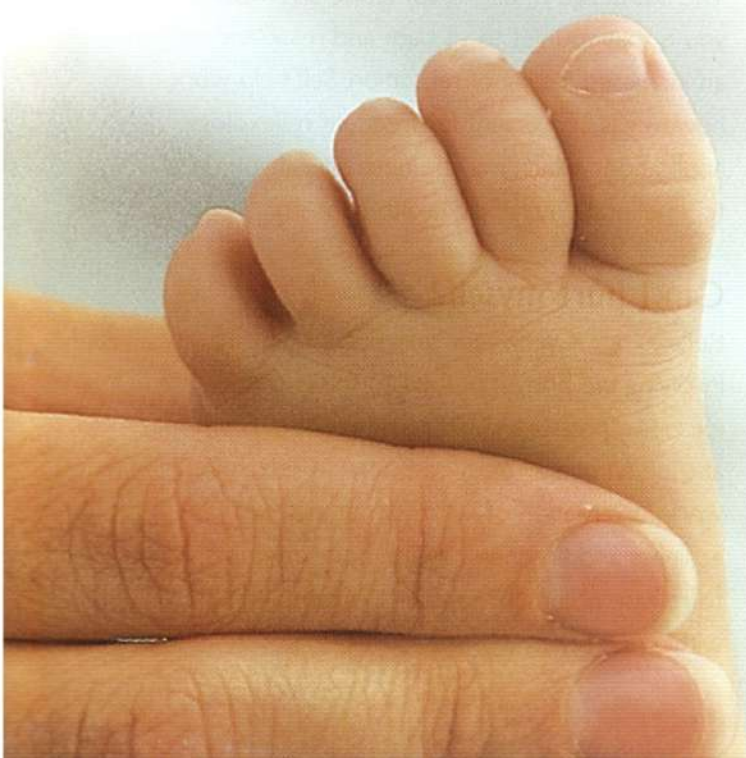
Many reflexologists find babies uniquely responsive to gentle reflexology treatment. Rubbing the ear reflex area on traveling infants' feet prior to takeoff or landing, for example, quickly and effectively rids the infant of the pain such experiences usually bring. A friend's baby was fussing during a visit and she asked us for help. A few gentle presses to the solar plexus reflex area of the foot calmed the infant. "Why don't we learn how to do that?" her husband asked. In this book you will find simple self-help tactics, like this one, to deal with many common infant health issues, such as colic, diarrhea, and sleep problems (*see pp. 118–19*).

## CHILDREN

Enduring images of warm person-to-person contact emerge from stories about reflexology use with young children. One woman is called "Foot" rather than "Auntie" by her two-year-old niece, who remembers and relates to her foot reflexology work. Another client had not forgotten his mother's work on his feet at bedtime every night as a child, even though 40 years had passed.

One five-year-old, during a journey, insisted on returning home for "his" golf ball. The parents discovered that he had acquired the habit of copying his babysitter's reflexology golf-ball technique (*see pp. 50–51*). While she used it to relieve her sinus headaches, the child had adopted it to ease his migraine headaches. The value of empowering a child to affect his or her body through a tool such as reflexology is beyond measure. How better to engender self-reliance than to give the child a means to communicate with his or her body? The application of self-help techniques allows the child an opportunity to interact with his or her "owies," as one two-year-old puts it. Children's natural curiosity and innate ability to learn create a unique role for reflexology in a child's life. The ability to "play" with one's hands and feet for benefit does not escape the notice of children.

Reflexology provides a wonderful way to connect with the children in your life. This may be especially valuable when watching a child experience illness, and it is at such times that many parents turn to reflexology to bolster conventional medical care. Use this book to help with childhood aches and pains (*see pp. 118–19*).





## OLDER PEOPLE

A succession of senior-citizen clients began requesting Friday appointments with us: their reasons soon became clear when one asked for "the tune-up." He explained that another client had told all his friends about how reflexology helped his love life and made weekends more fun. This hints at the improvement in quality of life that reflexology may offer seniors. Aging presents unique challenges and an increased need for solutions to special concerns. Whether you wish to ameliorate the physical effects of aging, such as aching joints and incontinence, or simply to reach out and touch someone older who has limited access to physical contact, use some of the ideas in this book to help you (*see pp. 122–23*).

## PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

When a serious degenerative disease prevented one of our clients from operating the remote control for the television, it robbed him of his last form of entertainment. Reflexology sessions, however, helped him recover the use of his thumb and regain control of the television. Reflexology can be used to provide special stimulation for special people. Without pressure to the soles of the feet, for example, the associated muscles, nerves, and bones may degenerate, and so, for those who spend a great deal of time in a wheelchair, reflexology provides welcome sensory stimulation. For those trying to maintain function in the hands, applying hand work can boost manipulative skills. In our work, we have also seen reflexology increase muscle tone and have a positive impact on internal organs. As well as helpful general foot and hand workouts (*see pp. 68–117*), you will find in this book techniques to target a range of health concerns (*see pp. 130–53*).

## THOSE WITH SERIOUS ILLNESS

A friend called not too long ago to ask for referral to a reflexologist in her city. She wanted help for her once-estranged sister, who had just been diagnosed with cancer and had but a short time to live. Instead, we told her how she could use reflexology herself to work with her

sister. She later wrote to tell us how much it had meant to both of them. Reflexology, while offering the potential to counter pain and help ease the symptoms of specific conditions, is perhaps as useful to giver as recipient in that it provides an opportunity to offer a loved one tangible support during a difficult time. In such circumstances, it provides an extremely valuable extra measure of care that goes beyond what a professional can provide. Relish the chance to reach out and make a difference, and to empower yourself as well as ease the pain of a loved one with the techniques that target specific health problems (*see pp. 130–53*).

## PREGNANT WOMEN

As she was being rolled into the delivery room, our niece insisted that someone get her golf ball for use as a reflexology tool during delivery. The nurses were surprised when she delivered so quickly and easily. Reflexology use is increasing among medical personnel involved in pregnancy and childbirth, and studies vouch for its efficacy. In *The Effects of Reflexology on Labour Outcome* (UK, 1989), Dr. Gowri Motha and Jane McGrath found that pregnant women who completed a course of ten sessions of reflexology experienced benefits in labor outcomes

Benefits in labor perceived as outstanding were experienced by pregnant women who had completed a set course of ten reflexology treatments.

perceived as outstanding. Some had labor times of only 2–3 hours: those aged 20–25 had an average time of first-stage labor of 5–6 hours, an average second stage of 16 minutes, and a third stage of 7 minutes. This compares well against the textbook average figures of 16–24 hours for a first stage of labor, and 1–2 hours for the second stage. Gabriella Bering Liisberg claimed in her 1989 study,



*Easier Births Using Reflexology*, that 90 percent of women who chose reflexology as an alternative to painkilling drugs and drugs aimed at inducing and stimulating labor stated that reflexology had helped reduce their pain.

Whether you wish to use pain-relief techniques in labor, or simply want to soothe the symptoms and discomforts associated with pregnancy and labor, such as edema and an aching lower back, that can make the 40 weeks of pregnancy uncomfortable, this book provides you with the resources (*see pp. 120–21 and 130–53*).

## IN THE WORKPLACE

Our client Sue considered leaving the teaching profession due to sore feet—she could no longer stand comfortably in front of a class all day. Once she became aware of reflexology techniques for breaking up patterns of stress, however, she invented a solution to her problem. Several times a day, she walked barefoot on the rounded sticks used by her elementary-school music students.

Reflexology is particularly beneficial for those in jobs that require long hours of standing or walking, such as teaching, nursing, hairdressing, waiting tables,

and sales professions. It offers an opportunity to interrupt the stress of standing and of overusing one part of the body by providing a break in routine. It also helps establish new patterns of using the body and a more relaxed state of being, as, to paraphrase stress researcher Hans Selye, it is not just the stress that creates the problem, but the continuity of that stress.

For the same reasons, those who work long hours at keyboards often use hand reflexology to relieve symptoms caused by overuse of this part of the body. Try the self-help techniques for hands and feet, and for those in the office and on the move (*see pp. 124–29*).

## THOSE WITH MENTAL-HEALTH NEEDS

At a British walk-in health clinic for people with mental-health problems, a reflexologist and a counselor worked with 74 people during 1996–97, with 49 receiving reflexology and 25 receiving counseling. All but two of the clients undergoing reflexology reported an increased level of relaxation and a decrease in feelings of anxiety. Release of tension through being able to talk led to a greater feeling of relaxation, alleviating headaches and improving sleep. Such studies highlight the important role reflexology and other one-to-one complementary therapies can play in helping relieve the symptoms of mental health problems. Of particular importance was that the participants developed and increased their awareness of the effects of tension, and discovered an increased ability to change that state of being. The result was an encouraging improvement in emotional status, especially where reflexology and counseling were offered in tandem.

To help replace feelings such as fear, worry, and despair with more positive and fulfilling emotions, you might like to try the general foot and hand routines (*see pp. 68–117*) as well as the self-help care (*see pp. 124–29*).

Repetitive work such as typing, or jobs involving long hours of standing, can cause patterns of stress; reflexology can interrupt these stresses and ease associated tensions.





# REFLEXOLOGY RESEARCH

For the 60 years of reflexology's modern history, reflexologists have reported success stories. Now clinical research is catching up, producing studies that note the positive benefits of reflexology, such as speedier postoperative recovery, or a decrease in symptoms associated with coronary heart disease.

Recent research has shown reflexology to be effective at encouraging the body to return to a state of natural equilibrium. An Austrian study in 1999 and a Chinese study in 1994, for example, showed respectively that kidney and bowel function of those receiving reflexology seem to be more efficient. Three Chinese trials in 1996 reported that mothers often gave birth more easily and lactated more quickly, children with cerebral palsy showed improved growth rates, and patients receiving reflexology demonstrated diminished levels of free radicals.

## HELPING TO TACKLE SYMPTOMS

A Chinese study in 1998 revealed that, for those patients receiving foot reflexology sessions, symptoms of chest distress, coronary heart disease, and angina dispersed, and blood-pressure levels dropped. Foot reflexology helped patients pass kidney and ureter stones faster (according to a 1996 Chinese study) and less painfully (as reported in a Danish trial in 1993). In a 1994 Swiss study, some postoperative patients receiving reflexology work exhibited signs of enhanced kidney and bowel activity and demonstrated a decreased need for medication when compared with control groups, as did some mothers who gave birth using reflexology for pain relief. Research conducted for specific conditions,

including sinusitis (US, 2000), headaches (Denmark, 1997), toothaches (China, 1994), PMS (*Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 1993), amenorrhea (China, 1996), male sexual dysfunction (China, 1996), hyperlipidemia (high levels of fat in the blood: China, 1996), constipation (China, 1994), and multiple sclerosis (UK, 1997), reflected a reduction in symptoms for patients receiving reflexology work.

## A SAFER OPTION?

Various research studies in China between 1993 and 1998 suggested that reflexology may be safer than conventional medical treatment in alleviating the symptoms of certain conditions, such as uroschesis (the retention of urine following surgery), dyspepsia, neurodermatitis, leukopenia (an abnormally low white blood cell count), and coronary heart disease. There was evidence in other Chinese trials during the same period to suggest that reflexology combined with conventional treatment could improve the effectiveness of medication for diabetes, kidney infection, and infantile pneumonia.

Most importantly, perhaps, studies have concluded that reflexology can bring a marked improvement in quality of life. In 1995 it was reported in the UK that people with Alzheimer's disease who were receiving reflexology work exhibited alleviated symptoms of restlessness and wandering alongside a reduction in stiffness and arthritis. A study in 1997 by Peta Trousdale and Andrea Uphoff-Chmielnik established positive results for people with mental health problems, where those receiving reflexology work exhibited increased relaxation, decreased anxiety, eased headaches, and improved sleep patterns. In many cases, people reported that positive, fulfilling emotions replaced fear, worry, and despair.

A Swiss trial in 1994 found that postoperative patients receiving foot reflexology exhibited a reduced need for medication.



# REFLEXOLOGY IN MEDICAL CARE

In recent years, some conventional medical practitioners have welcomed reflexology as a treatment able to complement their own practice. Some midwives and obstetricians regard the therapy as a safe, natural, and noninvasive way to care for mothers in labor. Doctors may use it in hospitals to support postoperative recovery and intensive care, and reflexology can play a valuable role in palliative care.

## OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY

Nurses and midwives in obstetric and gynecological units have embraced reflexology to help relieve pain during childbirth and to resolve complications. Reflexology can be used to induce labor—indeed, some nurses and midwives on the website [www.babyworld.co.uk](http://www.babyworld.co.uk) suggest it may be more effective than rupturing the membranes—and to increase the strength and efficacy of contractions. Reflexology can also be used to calm contractions that are too painful, or regulate contractions that are sporadic. Some practitioners claim that reflexology can reduce the length of a labor, or allow patients to gain welcome rest, or even sleep, between contractions during a long birth. In the third stage of childbirth, reflexology can be used to help expel a retained placenta, and also help relieve urinary retention after delivery. Such results are reported by the Reflexology Department of the National Maternity Hospital in Dublin, Ireland. Established in 1995 following demands by doctors, patients, and midwife practitioners, it reports enormous benefits across women's services in the hospital: as well as for obstetrics, treatment is given for pre- and postnatal depression, endometriosis, and PMS.

## REFLEXOLOGY IN HOSPITALS

Medical use of reflexology is not restricted to women's healthcare services. Reflexology is included in programs at several surgical departments of Columbia University in New York City. The Columbia Integrative Medicine

Program of the Department of Surgery has established that reflexology is an ideal therapy for use in intensive care units or for patients immediately after surgery, since reflexology techniques applied to the feet leave more sensitive parts of the body undisturbed.

Reflexology also plays a important role at the Complementary Cardiac Care Unit (CCCU) at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City. Here, the inclusion of complementary medicine alongside conventional care has been patient-driven—many of the cardiac patients had already explored complementary therapies. The center notes that massage and reflexology, for instance, are both popular among patients in the program and that nearly 60 percent of patients in the unit use them. That is, of the 1,400 cardiac care unit patients seen here each year, 60 percent choose to participate in complementary medicine in this way.

### REFLEXOLOGY USE IN MEDICINE

Medical facilities and hospices report using reflexology to help with the following:

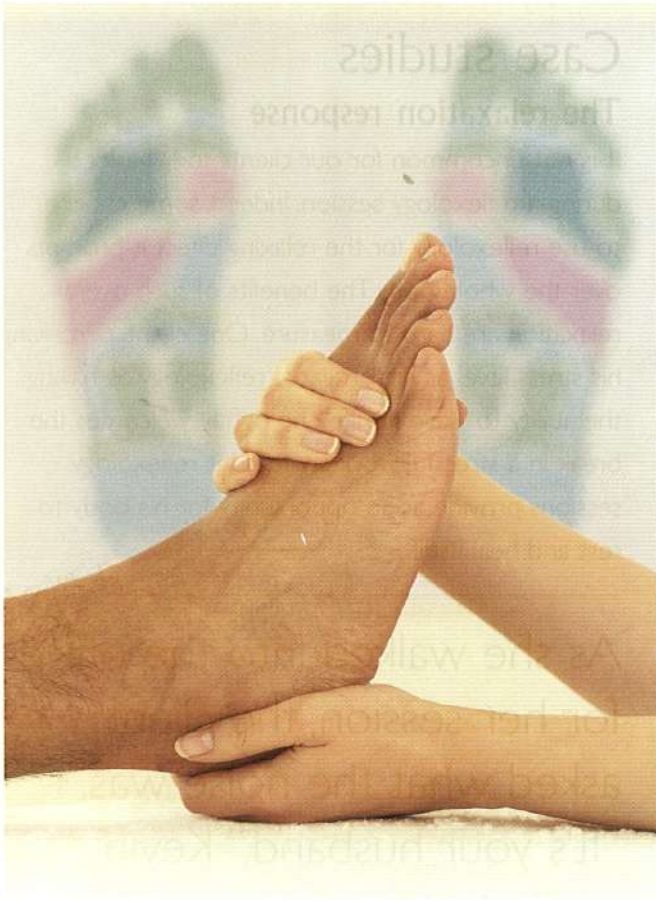
Obstetrics and gynecology, particularly during childbirth and its complications

Postoperative care

Patient support classes

Palliative care for cancer patients





Increasingly, reflexology work is being integrated into healthcare programs at several hospitals, playing a role in palliative care and in postoperative treatment.

## PATIENT SUPPORT

In some healthcare establishments, reflexology classes are offered to patients, educating them in self-care strategies that may help ease their medical problems. Reflexology classes for people with incontinence, for example, are held at Suburban Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland. Reflexology classes are also taught at Southpoint Hospital in Chagrin Falls, Ohio, and Avera Queen of Peace Hospital's Wellness Center in South Dakota. Some practitioners are interested in the potential emotional and preventative support such self-help therapies may offer. One such practitioner is Dr. Mehmet Oz, cofounder of the CCCU at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City. He is eager to learn how complementary

therapies such as reflexology might help to alleviate the post-surgical impact on patients of depression, anxiety, pain, and infection, stating "...as allopathic clinicians, physicians felt that the emotional, palliative, and/or preventive care requested by patients were areas that surgeons were not well trained to provide."

## PALLIATIVE CARE

Reflexology also increasingly plays a role in the palliative care of cancer patients. Reflexology is included at complementary therapy centers within cancer units at Charing Cross Hospital, Hammersmith Hospital, the Harley Street Clinic, and Lister Hospital in the UK. And outside such centers, cancer support groups, such as Cancer BACUP Cancer Support Service and the Hampshire County Council Cancer Care Society in the UK, provide reflexology services, information, and/or referral to reflexologists. But the giving of reflexology treatments is not confined to medical staff. Concerned family members and volunteers eager to express their care through touch-work offer reflexology to loved ones alongside paid professionals in cancer units and hospices.

The providing of reflexology services has grown to meet hospice goals across the UK: to provide dignity, choices, and control for each patient and family. Specific aims for reflexology work in such settings include improving a patient's quality of life, offering practical ways to cope with life-threatening illness, providing comfort, and enhancing both the patient's and the carer's sense of physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being, and all while helping to control the symptoms of specific diseases and alleviating general symptoms including pain and anxiety.

*The American Cancer Society Journal* found that one-third of cancer patients used reflexology as an alternative medical approach.



## SUCCESS STORIES

The world of reflexology is alive with success stories recounted by practitioners and patients alike. Such anecdotal evidence attests to the willingness of reflexology patients to participate in the healing process, a factor that may be vital for the efficacy of complementary therapies.

Stories of success illustrate the benefits of reflexology: above all, its ability to elicit a relaxation response in body and mind in a natural, drug-free way, and release endorphins, the body's "feel-good" chemicals, possibly the best way to relieve stress. Reflexology treatments help our clients survive the demands of high-pressure jobs, busy family lives, and active athletic pastimes.

Reflexology is also highly valued by patients and practitioners as a means of triggering the body to respond to particular ailments, and by rebalancing body, mind, and emotions, to maintain health by preventing medical conditions from arising or worsening. There is evidence to indicate that some reflexology techniques even reduce the need for medication, or help medicines work more effectively. Reflexology thus offers a means of interacting with and gaining a sense of control over the body—and the knowledge that one can have a positive effect on one's own health can only provide an emotional uplift.

On a practical level, many success stories acclaim reflexology for aiding recovery from the pain of injury, particularly of the feet and hands, and even for helping the body recover from past injuries. In easing overused hands and feet, reflexology is also thought to prevent injury from occurring and to help maintain manual dexterity and mobility into later life.

## Case studies

### The relaxation response

It is not uncommon for our clients to fall asleep during a reflexology session. Indeed, some choose to use reflexology for the relaxing effect it prompts over the whole body. The benefits of such overall relaxation are hard to measure. One client, perceiving his stress level as high, regards reflexology as having the ability to "save his life"; he rightly welcomes the break in a stressful workday that his reflexology sessions provide as an opportunity for his body to rest and heal itself.

As she walked into the office for her session, the client asked what the noise was. "It's your husband," Kevin replied. Her husband, a high-powered lawyer, had fallen asleep during his session and was snoring loudly.

### Injury-repair

It had been forty years since the high-school coach had sent our client back into the game with what turned out to be a broken heel-bone. Our client was still aware of the injury, however, as he traveled for business, rushing through airports, or played a game of tennis during his leisure time. "When I see the doctor, I get a prescription," he reported to us. "When I see you reflexologists, I simply feel better."



### Easing common health problems

Life was made miserable for our client Bob by his sinus problems and sinus headaches. Medicines just would not help his problem, and other complementary therapies didn't seem to help, either. We showed Bob a simple reflexology golf ball technique (see p. 50), which gave him the resources to heal his problem. Bob did, however, develop a new problem: annoyance with his office colleague's sinus problems. Tired of listening to his colleague's symptoms, he gave him a golf ball and taught him the technique, too. Reflexology enabled Bob not only to address his own health issues, but offer nonintrusive help to others wishing to address their own health problems.

With reflexology, Bob could not only gain control over his own state of health, but help others, too.

### Freedom from medication

Her asthma and struggling to breathe would wake our client Susan in the middle of the night. Susan's concern was that she had become desensitized to her prescribed asthma medication and that it no longer offered a solution. We showed her a self-help technique to apply to the adrenal gland reflex area. She reported back that she could breathe freely again after applying the technique.

### Rejuvenating the hands and feet

Her catering business kept our client Sharon on her feet for hours at a time. Tired feet and tired hands were taking their toll on her health, as were the

headaches, backaches, and fatigue that accompanied them. Sharon felt her overall health was going downhill. Having relieved her symptoms, reflexology sessions now gain her total devotion. She says they have changed her life.

Sharon, like many others, has extended reflexology use to her whole family: her mother's eye problem, her daughter's whiplash injury, and another daughter's tiredness have all been addressed by reflexology treatment.

### Instant results

Our client was a minister's kind wife who would eat the food served to her at a parishioner's house even though it gave her extreme gastric distress. On the way to the hospital following one such event, she tried a hand reflexology technique we had showed her. The driver turned around on seeing that she had relieved herself of the distress so completely.

The client reported that she appreciated not only the relief from the gastric distress, but also the relief of not having to visit the emergency room.



## VISITING A REFLEXOLOGIST

Visiting a reflexologist is like visiting any other healthcare professional. You should expect the same professional environment and attitude from a reflexologist as from a doctor or dentist. A professional environment includes a clean, well-lit, and inviting workplace. Expect to be seated on a reclining chair or perhaps a massage table, and check that the therapist ensures that your knees are supported during reflexology work. Expect to remove your shoes and socks or hose—women may feel more comfortable wearing slacks, or should be offered a towel to cover bare legs.

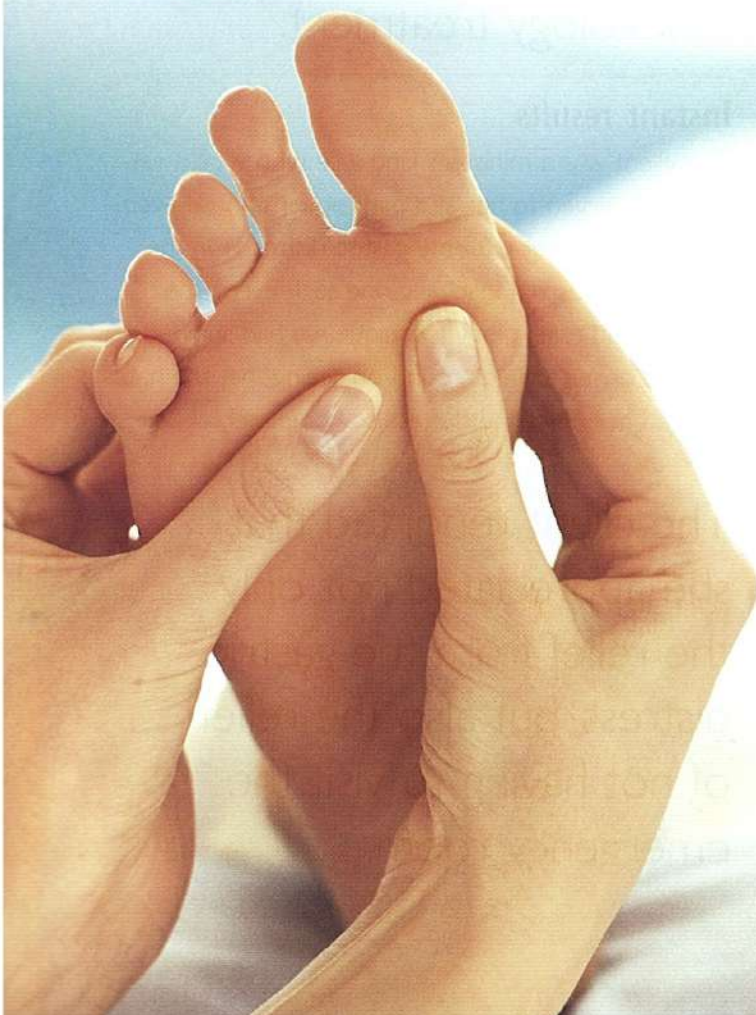
The length of a reflexology session can range from 30–45 minutes up to even an hour in length. A professional reflexologist should apply the techniques systematically and thoroughly to each foot. After finishing work on one foot, the practitioner should apply further techniques to areas that he or she considers need more work. “Desserts,” or feel-good techniques, should also be applied.

Technique application should fall within your comfort level: this means it should “hurt good” if it hurts at all, and not seem threatening in any way. If you feel any discomfort, ask the reflexologist to lighten pressure, and he or she should do so.

Expect a professional reflexologist to apply sufficient and appropriate techniques to give you a sense of relaxation. You should also be given feedback as he or she carries out the session and assesses different reflex areas. In turn, he or she should also listen to your concerns and pay attention to your likes and dislikes. Favorite desserts, areas to which technique is applied, and parts that you report “hurt good,” should all be remembered by the reflexologist for subsequent treatments.

### MASSAGE OR REFLEXOLOGY?

Reflexology is considered a science by many, but there is also an art to the craft. While there is a professional standard of practice, the specifics of the pressure techniques used can vary from individual to individual and depend on where he or she received training. Use of creams, lotions, and oils is accepted by some reflexologists, while others argue that this is foot massage and not necessarily reflexology.





## Questions to ask

When opting for a reflexology session, stay aware of your own tastes and keep in mind the reasons for which you approached the reflexologist. Whether it is tired feet, relaxation, a health concern, or another reason, make your interests known to the reflexologist. It is important to ask questions of your reflexologist to ensure you receive appropriate treatment. You might find it useful to start by thinking about some of the following questions.

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### *Questions to ask yourself:*

#### **How do I feel after the session?**

After you've tried a reflexology session, ask yourself whether you feel that your feet or hands have been thoroughly worked, your questions have been fully answered, and you have been treated professionally. Finally, try to assess whether you consider that you have gotten your money's worth.

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#### **What physical sensations do I feel?**

You should experience feelings of relaxation after a reflexology session. After a reflexology session, some individuals feel a direct impact on their feet: common statements include "My feet feel lighter" and "I feel as if I'm walking on pillows."

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### *Questions to ask the reflexologist:*

#### **What training and experience do you have?**

A reflexologist who has completed a course of study of 50 hours or more and who has at least a year's experience of practice will often have the training and experience you are looking for. Be aware that standards have changed over the years. Ten years ago, a weekend course was acceptable to qualify someone to practice. Someone with ten years' experience following a weekend course may be worth visiting,

but a practitioner educated recently with a weekend course and little practical experience may not be able to provide the skilled services you require. Check your practitioner's credentials for any qualifications and membership of organizations (see p. 154).

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#### **Do you provide other services or sell products?**

Be aware that someone who has expanded into selling products or offering other complementary therapies may not be as experienced in giving reflexology treatment as a full-time reflexologist.

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#### **What kind of services do you provide?**

Ask the reflexologist about the nature of his or her services. Whether the practitioner primarily works on the hands or feet, for example: you may prefer to have your hands worked rather than your feet, perhaps depending on your occupation and your daily patterns of hand and foot use. Whether he or she offers sessions using cream, oil, or lotion is another factor. The question is whether the practitioner is providing reflexology or foot massage services. You should ensure that the answer matches what you are comfortable with and what is effective for you.

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#### **How many sessions do I need in order to see results?**

You should start seeing results within two or three sessions—you may notice that you feel more relaxed or that a particular health problem has eased. Be wary of any practitioner who, in your opinion, seems to pressure you into much longer courses of treatment, but do keep in mind that the longer you have had a health problem, the longer results will take to show.



