

GIVING A REFLEXOLOGY SESSION

This chapter guides you, step by step, through a complete hand and foot reflexology sequence.

“Desserts” applied at the beginning and end of each “step” aim to promote a sense of relaxation.

There’s also a handy self-help section, which shows you how to give yourself a discreet workout, and advice on the needs of babies and children, pregnant women, and the elderly. Following these sequences regularly can help restore your body to full health.

PREPARING FOR A REFLEXOLOGY SESSION

As you prepare to give a reflexology workout, your goal should be to create a relaxing interchange between yourself and a friend or relative. You want to have the maximum effect with the minimum amount of effort. This includes creating a comfortable setting for yourself and the other individual, paying attention to the effect of your work, and even selecting an appropriate time.

In creating your ideal setting for a reflexology session, consider what is available to you and what you find comfortable. Place your arms next to your body. Now raise your hands so that your elbows are bent at a 90° angle. This is an optimal position for your working hands. The feet or hands on which you are working should be placed in a position comfortably reached by your working hands.

For a session with a professional reflexologist, the individual is seated in a recliner or other chair that raises the feet into position. The reflexologist sits in a low chair facing the reclining chair. You may prefer a more informal setting, such as sitting on a sofa facing each other. Whatever your working arrangement, be in a position to watch the individual's face for his or her reaction to your work. Be careful that your back is supported and that your work doesn't cause aching or stress to your own body. [Once you've finished your work, think about how you feel: are your hands stressed and is your back tired?]

OPTIMUM POSITIONING

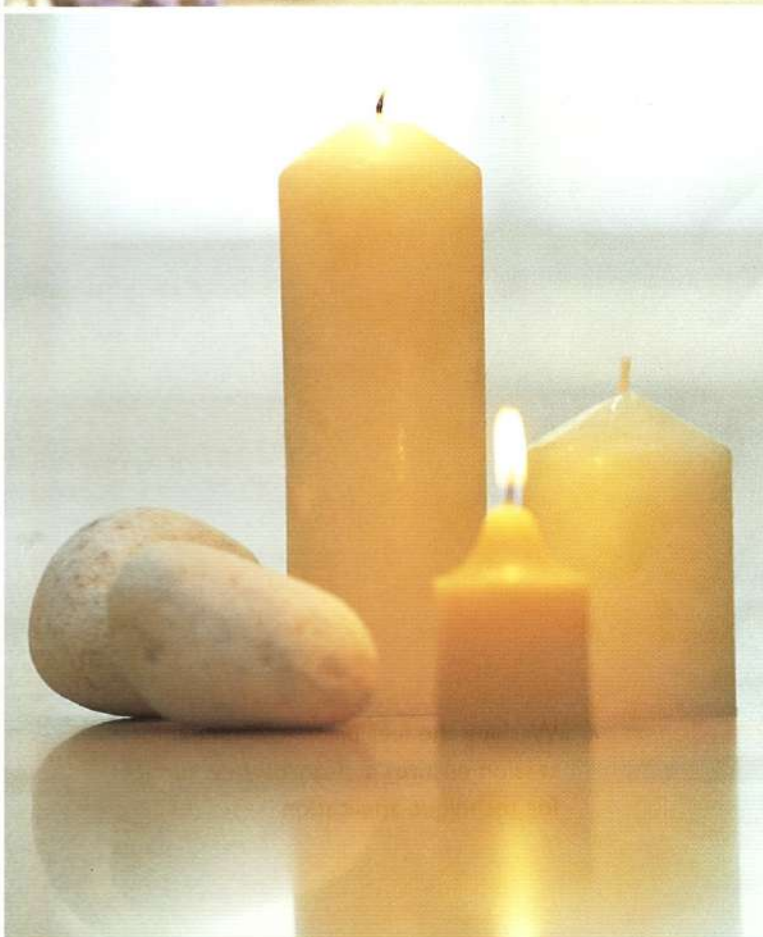
When working on the hands, sitting side by side with the individual works well, as long as you ensure that you can still see his or her face. Change sides to work on the other hand. When working with a child, you may choose sitting on the side of the bed for a quiet few minutes and giving a brief foot workout at bedtime.

Sitting with the individual's face in your view allows you to gauge his or her reactions to your work. Falling asleep and smiles are good. Frowns and pulling the foot away are bad. You want to apply reflexology technique within the individual's comfort zone. There's an old saying in reflexology: it hurts good. (Yes, people do say this.) The counterpart is: it hurts bad. Keep an eye on the individual's face to see what techniques are favored and which reflex areas are sensitive. Also, be aware of how much pressure you are using. A child, a small individual, the elderly, or anyone with thin feet will require less pressure than a large man, for example.

ACCESSORIES AND ENVIRONMENT

Take time to assemble a few accessories. A few throw pillows are handy to raise the level of the foot or to provide cushioning on which the hand or foot will rest as you work. A throw or light blanket is helpful: you may be warm because you are working, but the other person is resting and may become chilled. A box of tissues is convenient for the occasional running nose.

Consider the environment. What would you like yourself? The ringing telephone, others in the room, the television, bright lighting, even what is in the sightline of the individual—are such elements contributing to your goal? If your goal is to create the ultimate relaxing moment or a quiet time for conversation, you may want to limit such distractions. Communicate and find out



what your mutual ideal environment is at the moment. For your own part, you may appreciate few distractions, especially as you learn.

A further element of preparation involves your fingernails. Nails should not be too long or too short. If too long they will make contact with the receiver's foot or hand and detract from relaxation. If you see fingernail marks on the foot or hand, consider cutting your nails. The optimal length for fingernails is when your fingertips, rather than your fingernails, are visible as you look at the tops of your hands. If your nails are cut too short, to the quick, it could prove to be uncomfortable as the nail pulls away from the skin underneath.

The techniques described in this book do not utilize cream, oil, or lotion. Like running in wet sand, these emollients can create over-work for your thumbs and damage them. Likewise the individual you are working with should have clean feet, free of emollients.

BEGINNING THE SESSION

Always begin your work with a series of desserts (*see p. 68*). Desserts play an important part in the workout. The workout follows a specific pattern, enabling you to work through the entire foot or hand. As you work through each section of the foot or hand, apply a series of desserts before going on to the next section. At the finish of your work, apply a further series of desserts.

How long should technique be applied to any individual reflex area? The answer to this question is custom-tailored to the individual with whom you are working. Infants, children, and the elderly generally require a light touch: less pressure and less time are the watchwords. Over-work of a reflex area is possible. If the individual reports that the area feels bruised, it has been over-worked. Avoid the area until sensitivity diminishes. Work it less when your reflexology work begins again.

Candles can help to create a relaxing atmosphere for a reflexology session, while cushions and blankets are useful for keeping the receiver warm and comfortable while his or her feet or hands are being worked.



Washing the feet prior to a reflexology session ensures a clean, oil-free surface for technique application.

A professional reflexologist will spend anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour providing a workout. At the beginning of your work with reflexology, you will find that your hands and thumb may tire. A half-hour may be too much. If so, there are several strategies for avoiding fatigue (*see box below*).

TARGETING HEALTH CONCERNS

After you've worked through the foot, it's time to consider areas of emphasis. These are areas that need extra attention. To choose such areas, consider your goals. Is there a specific health problem of concern? If so, turn to chapter 5, Reflexology to Target Health Concerns, and find your health concern. Note the reflex areas listed and apply technique to them. Or consult the reflexology charts (*see pp. 16–23*). Apply a series of desserts again, after working any specific areas.

Now move on to the other foot, where you'll repeat the above. When you've finished your work with the second foot, it's time for a closing technique, such as a gentle breathing hold (*see above right*).

TIPS FOR AVOIDING TIREDNESS

TIME: Give yourself time to learn—just as with 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 p. 124–29*) to help build your strength.

DESSERTS: Take a tip from the professionals and break up your work with "desserts" (*see p. 68–73*), since these provide a chance for your working thumb or finger to take a rest.

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



End a session by placing your thumbs in the solar plexus reflex areas of each foot, pressing slightly and asking the receiver to take three slow, deep breaths with you.

KEY TO TECHNIQUE SYMBOLS

Finger walking



Thumb walking



Hook & back up



Rolling



Pressure



Traction, pulling, pushing, or side to side



Rotation or rotation on a point



Twist



Sole mover or palm rocker



TECHNIQUES

There are four basic techniques used in reflexology. Their purpose is to apply pressure over a broad area, or to pinpoint a more specific one. As with any skill, it takes time to build ability, so it is a good idea to practice them on your forearm or hand. If your thumb or finger becomes tired while you're learning, rest, change hands, or apply desserts (see pp. 68–73 and 98–101) instead.

Thumb walking

The goal of the thumb walking technique is to apply a constant, steady pressure to the surface of the foot or hand. This basic reflexology technique will require some practice. Be patient. Give yourself some time to acquire this valuable skill. It will enable you to help yourself and others to reach health goals.

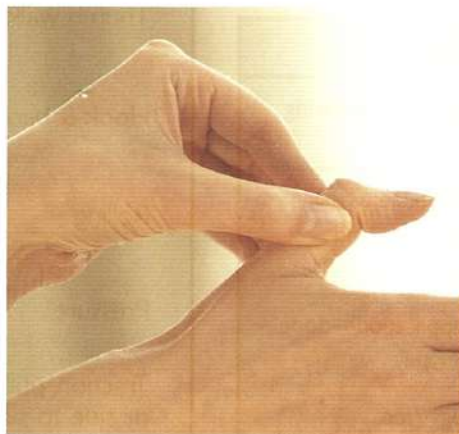
LEARNING TIP

Thumb walking is made easier by the use of the proper angle of the thumb. Lay your hands down on a table or flat surface. Note how the thumb rests on the table. The outside edge now making contact with the table is the part of the thumb that should make contact with the surface to be worked. By using this area of the thumb, you take best advantage 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” to create a feeling of constant, steady pressure.



1 First practice the thumb action by holding the thumb below the first joint to prevent movement of the second joint. Bend and unbend the first joint several times.



2 Continue holding on to your thumb. Place the outside edge of the thumb on your leg. Bend and unbend it several times, rocking it a little from the thumb tip to the lower edge of the nail.

Applying the technique

To thumb walk on the foot or hand, first create a smooth, even surface for your thumb's work. This can be achieved by using the hand not occupied with thumb walking as the holding hand.



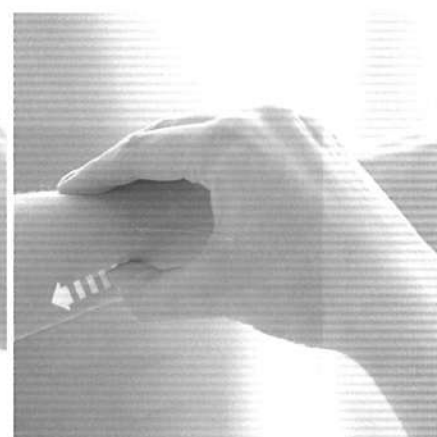
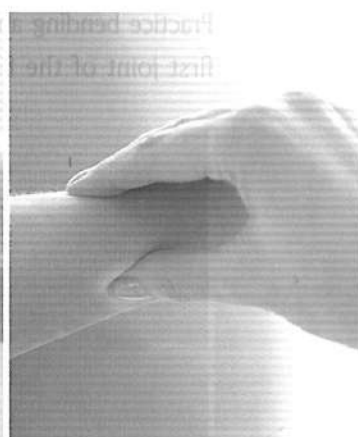
1 With the holding hand, stretch the sole of the foot. Rest your working thumb on the sole and your fingers on the top of the foot. Drop your wrist to create leverage, which exerts pressure with the thumb.

2 Bend and unbend the thumb's first joint, moving it forward a little bit at a time. When your working hand feels stretched, reposition it and continue "walking" it forward.

COMMON MISTAKES



A mistake often made when thumb walking is grasping the foot and trying to exert pressure by press, press, pressing with the thumb (see above). This is very wearing on the thumb. As you work, you should notice some space between your hand and the foot. The hand should not rest entirely on the foot. Always "walk" in a forward direction, not backward. Keep your thumb slightly cocked as you work to prevent over-extending it.



3 Remove the holding hand from your thumb. Walk the thumb forward. Bending and unbending are the sole means by which you move forward. Do not push the thumb forward.

4 To practice using leverage, place the fingers and thumb of your right hand on your forearm as shown above. Working together, these create the leverage needed to generate pressure.

5 Lower your wrist so that the thumb exerts pressure on your 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 feel a constant, steady pressure.

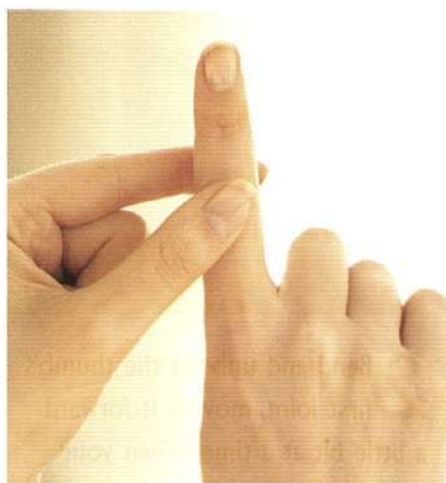
Finger walking

The finger walking technique is used to work comfortably on the top and sides of the foot or hand. Many of the principles of thumb walking

apply (*see p. 62*). This technique is based on the same principle as thumb walking: the bending and unbending of the first joint of the digit.

Practicing the technique

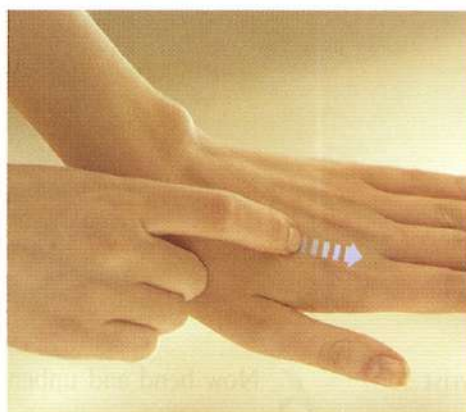
The top of the hand is a good practice ground for finger walking, which is very similar to thumb walking. The walking motion is created by a slight rocking back and forth from the fingertip to the lower edge of the fingernail, as the finger bends and unbends.



1 Hold the index finger below the first knuckle to help isolate the joint used in the technique (*see above*). Practice bending and unbending the first joint of the finger.



2 Once you have become familiar with the bending and unbending action required, place your index finger on top of your other hand.



3 Try bending and unbending the index finger from the first joint as its tip rests on top of the hand. Rock the fingertip to the lower edge of the fingernail and back. Repeat several times.



4 To create leverage using the finger walking technique, use the thumb in opposition to the fingers. Practice this by placing the four fingers on the forearm with the thumb underneath (*see above*).



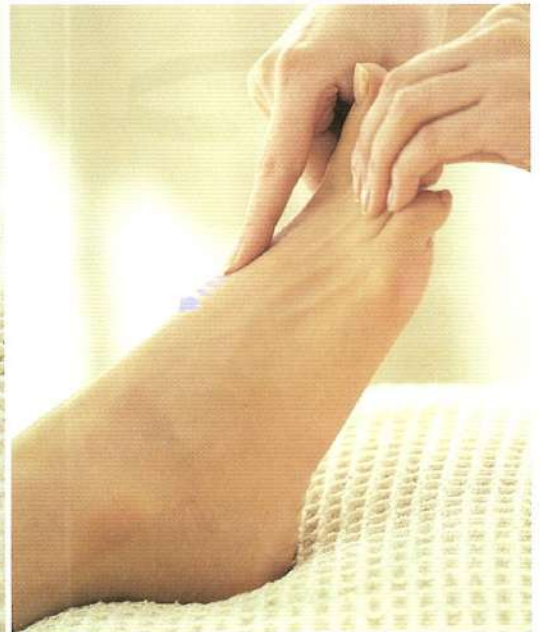
5 Raise the wrist, holding on with the thumb and pressing the fingers into the forearm. Note the increased pressure now exerted by the finger. Maintaining this position, “walk” the index finger forward.

Applying the technique

As with thumb walking, finger walking on the foot requires a stationary work surface. You can use your holding hand to steady the foot or hand.

1 The holding hand steadies the foot in an upright position by holding the toes. Rest your index finger on top of the foot and the thumb on the bottom.

2 With the working hand, use the index finger to finger walk down the top of the foot toward the middle.



LEARNING TIP

Frequently the finger will “learn” the finger walking technique on its own, seemingly from one’s ability to apply thumb walking. As with thumb walking, the finger always moves in a forward direction, never backward or sideways.

COMMON MISTAKES



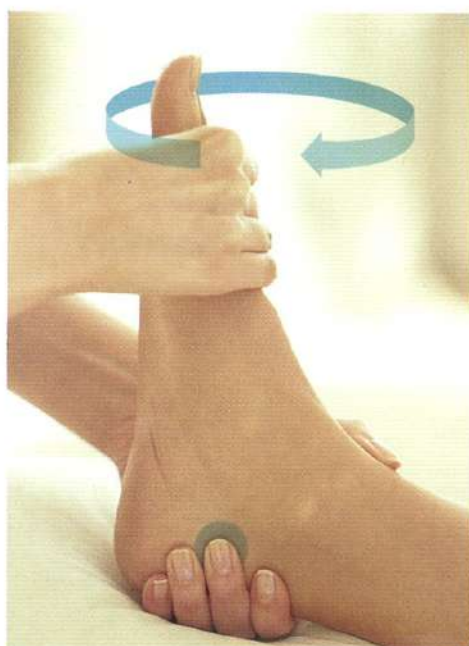
Problems can occur. Usually they involve difficulty in bending the first joint. Try to avoid the following: moving your hand rather than the first joint of the finger; digging the fingernail into the skin; allowing the walking finger to draw back rather than exerting a forward pressure; and rolling the walking finger from side to side. If you encounter any of these difficulties, review your technique by closely re-reading the instructions opposite.

Rotating on a point

As implied by the name, the object of this technique is to pinpoint a reflex area with the middle finger of one hand and then rotate the ankle or wrist. As the joint turns, the middle finger of the working hand stays stationary. This contact between the rotating foot and the static finger creates an “on/off” pressure.

LEARNING TIP

Do not grasp the foot around the toes. Also, the pinpointed area on the inside of the ankle is a sensitive area: rather than pressing with your fingers, allow the turning of the ankle to create pressure.



1 With the holding hand, cup the heel so that the thumb rests around the ankle. Allow the middle finger to rest on the inside of the ankle. With the other hand, hold the ball of the foot and rotate the foot clockwise, turning the foot in a complete 360° circle. Maintain a constant pressure of movement as you turn the foot, and notice that an on/off pressure is created by the static middle finger of your holding hand. Rotate in a clockwise direction several times.



2 Now repeat this action several times in a counter-clockwise direction. As you turn the foot, maintain a constant pressure of movement throughout each rotation.

Hook & back up

The hook and back up technique is used to work a specific point, rather than to cover a large area. It is a relatively stationary technique, with only small movements of the working thumb involved.

LEARNING TIP

To avoid digging your fingernail into the flesh, apply pressure using more of the flat of the thumb.

Practicing the technique

As with all techniques, leverage is extremely important in working with deeper points. Just as

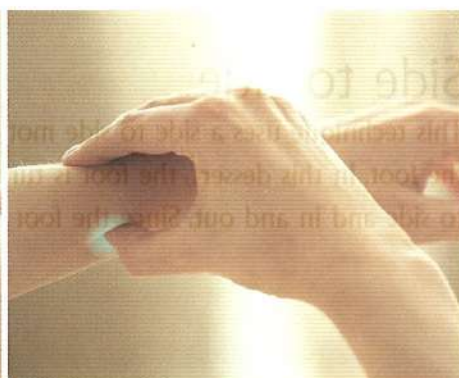
in the case of thumb walking, leverage is provided by the fingers and the position of the wrist.



1 Rest your working thumb on the palm of the other hand, placing your fingers on top. Bend the thumb's first joint, resting on the edge of the thumb. Now pull back with the thumb to exert pressure.



2 To practice using leverage, place the four fingers and the thumb of the working hand on the forearm (*see above*).



3 Lower the wrist of the working hand, causing the thumb to exert increased pressure on the arm. With the wrist lowered, hook in with the thumb and pull back.

Applying the technique

The holding hand needs to keep the area stationary as this technique is applied.

1 Support and protect the area to be worked with holding hand. The hand wraps around the area while the thumb and fingers hold it in place. Place the fingers of the working hand over those of the holding hand (*see right*).



2 Place the working thumb in the center of the area to be worked. Hook and back up, using the edge of the thumb.



FOOT DESSERTS

A “dessert” technique is something almost everyone likes. These desserts are techniques designed to relax the foot. They provide a beginning, an end, a transition between techniques, and a soothing touch when sensitivity is a problem. In helping to relax the foot, they make your work as a reflexologist easier, because a relaxed person is more receptive to technique application.

LEARNING TIP

This technique is most effective when applied rhythmically and rapidly. Keep your hands at the ball of the foot. Rest them lightly but firmly on the foot. Do not press too hard, since this will restrict the foot's movement. As you practice, you will become more adept at a quicker pace, with the strength to apply it for longer periods of time.

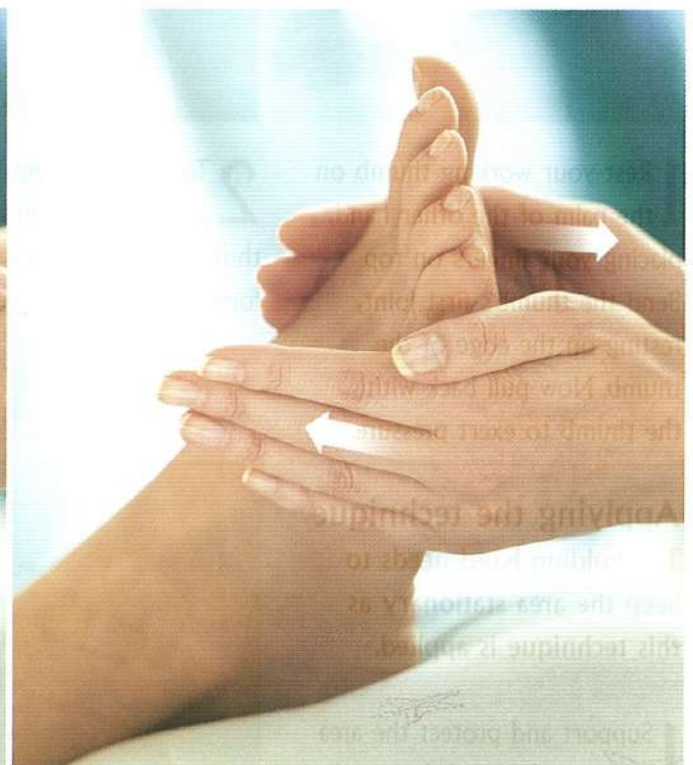
Side to side

This technique uses a side to side motion to relax the foot. In this dessert, the foot is turned from side to side and in and out. Since the foot is usually

restricted to the up and down movement of footsteps during the course of a day, this technique provides a particularly enjoyable variation.



1 Rest the hands on the sides of the foot. With the right hand, move the side of the foot away from you, while moving the other side toward you with your left hand.



2 Now move the right hand back toward you, pulling that side of the foot around, while pushing the other side of the foot away from you with the left hand. Alternate the actions of the hands, moving the sides of the foot quickly back and forth.

Spinal twist

This dessert is so named because it provides relaxation for the spinal reflex area along the inside of the foot. It is most comfortable if all digits make firm contact with the foot.

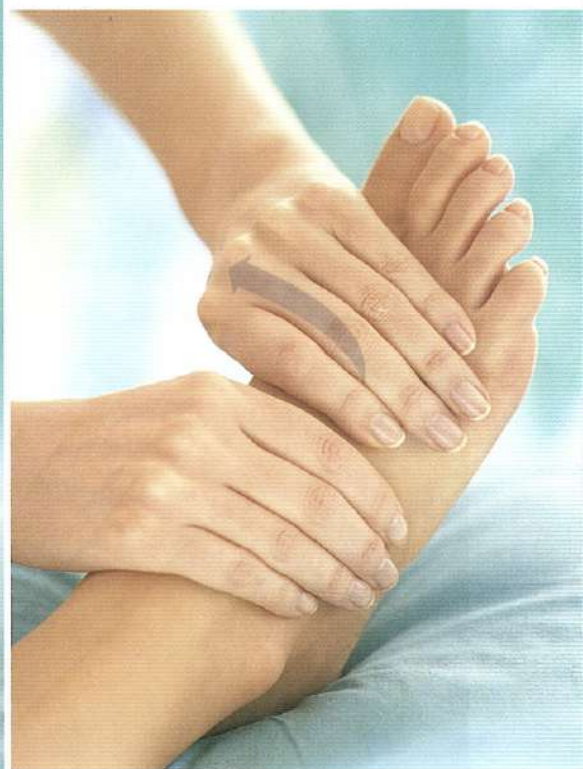


1 Grasp the inside of the foot with both hands, the thumbs resting on the sole of the foot. With the

hand closest to the toes, turn the foot. The other hand remains stationary.

LEARNING TIP

This technique is most successful when applied in a slow, easy motion. Grip the foot with a moderate pressure. The surfaces of the hands should be in full contact with the foot. Do not grip the toes. This can result in unpleasant toe-squeezing. Do not move both hands at once, since this causes friction.



2 Now move the same hand in the opposite direction, again keeping the hand nearest the ankle static. Repeat, twisting the foot gently from side to side several times. Reposition the hands, moving them both toward the ankle slightly, and repeat the whole movement several times again.

Lung press

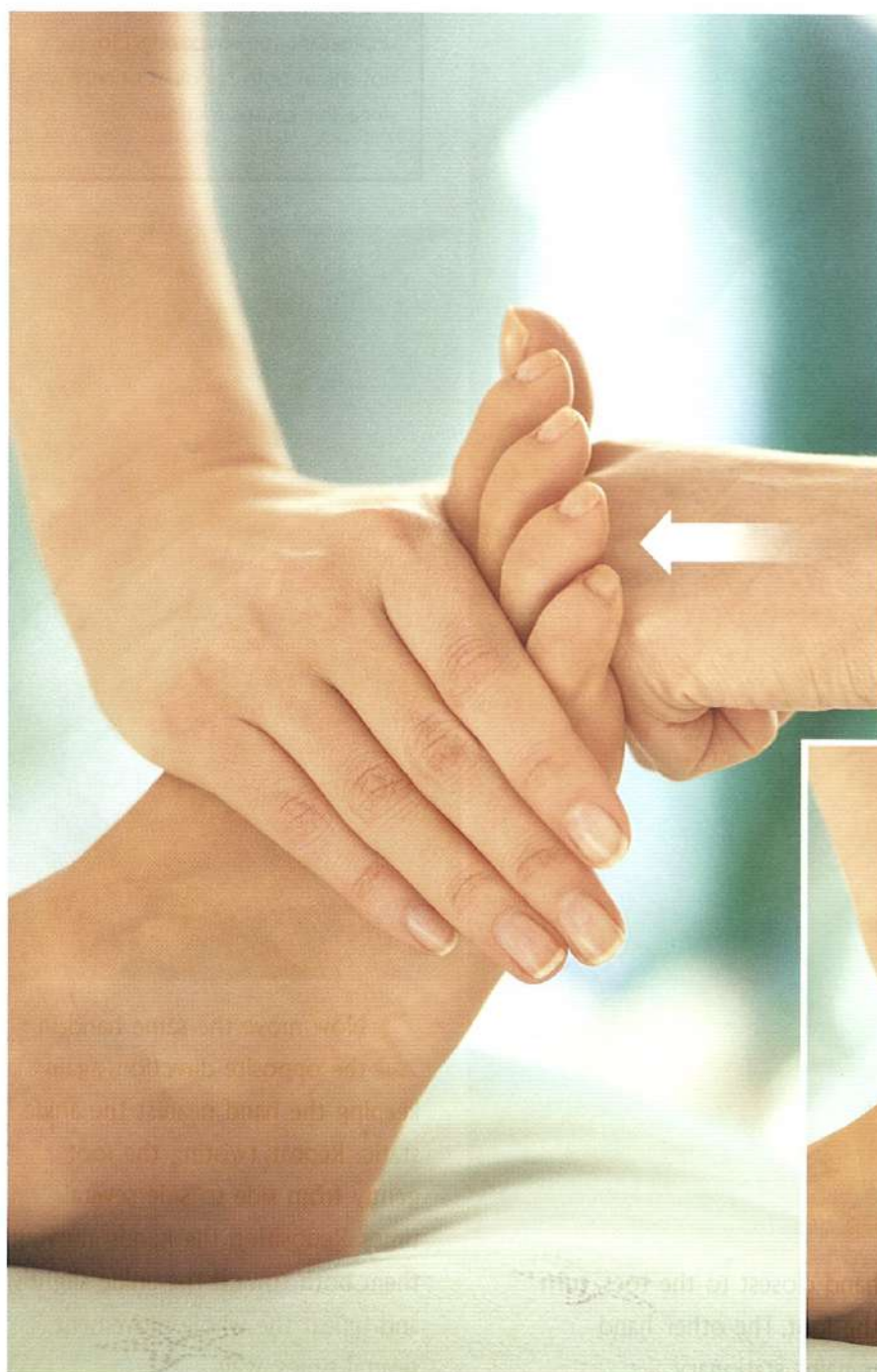
This dessert is so named because it provides relaxation to the lung reflex area in the ball of the foot. The art in this dessert lies in the smooth, wavelike motion created by coordinating the movements of the two hands. Think of the ebb and flow of a wave. One hand pushes and the other hand responds with a gentle squeeze.

LEARNING TIP

This dessert is most comfortable if the push/squeeze pattern is firm but gentle. You've squeezed too hard if the ball of the foot looks compressed. Do not squeeze and push at the same time. When positioning your fist, use the flats of the fingers and not the knuckles. Center your push/squeeze efforts in the ball of the foot, not in the arch and not in the toes.

1 Make a fist with the left hand. Rest the flat of the fist against the ball of the foot. Grasp the top of the foot with the right hand. Push with the fist.

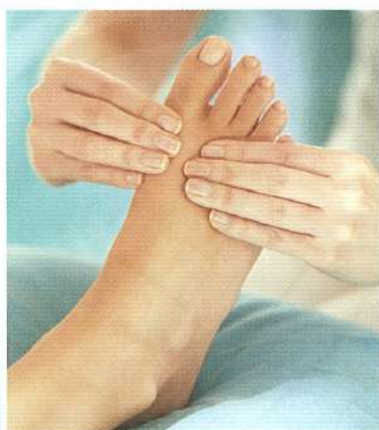
2 Now squeeze gently with the right hand. Develop a rhythmic push/squeeze pattern as you repeat the actions several times.



Sole mover

The goal of this technique is to create movement in the bones that make up the ball of the foot. It provides relaxation for the lung, chest, upper back, and diaphragm reflex areas—all common areas for stress.

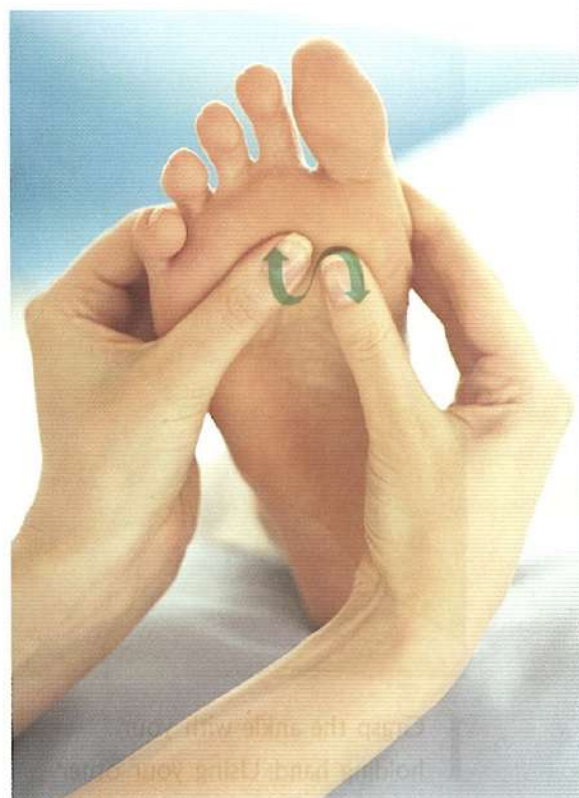
1 Grasp the ball of the foot below the big toe and second toe. Rest your finger and thumb tips on the knobby heads of the bones in the ball of the foot. Move the foot away from you with the right hand and toward you with the left hand.



Rest your fingertips on the top side of the foot, with the tips of your thumbs on the underside.

LEARNING TIP

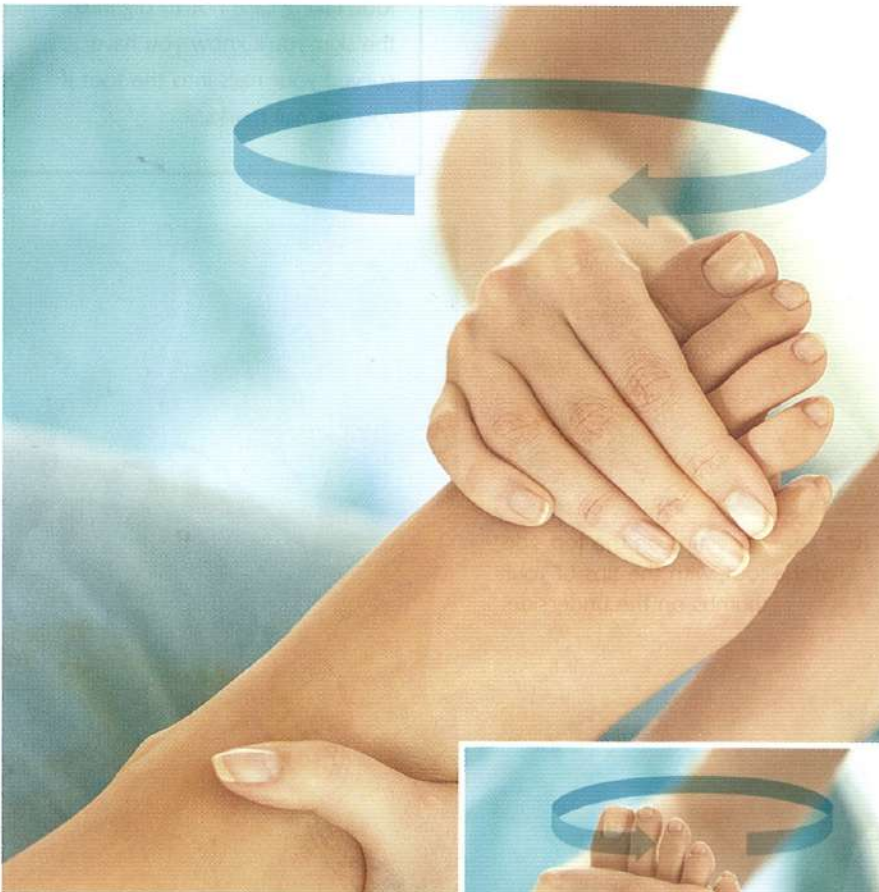
Try moving your hands in a circular motion. It will create a unique experience for the foot. Watch your fingernails on the top of the foot, taking care not to dig into the skin: you'll know you have curved your nails into the foot if you see nail marks.



2 Now reverse the motions, moving the foot toward you with the right hand and away from you with the left. Repeat this pattern several times, establishing a rhythm. Go on to the ball of the foot below the second and third toes and apply this technique. Do the same with the third and fourth, and then the fourth and fifth toes.

Ankle rotation

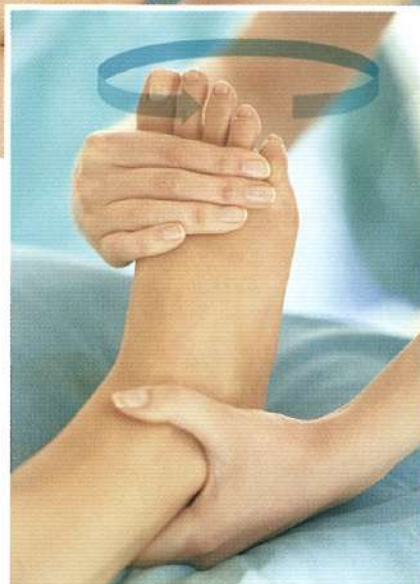
This dessert is also an exercise. By turning the foot in a complete 360° circle, you are exercising and relaxing the four major muscle groups that control the movements of the foot. It also helps ease fluid retention around the ankles.



1 Grasp the ankle with your holding hand. Using your other hand, hold the ball of the foot and rotate the toes in a clockwise direction to make a 360° circle. Repeat several times.

LEARNING TIP

Rest the thumb of the holding hand below the ankle bone. Pull the foot toward you with the holding hand, and then turn it with the other hand.



2 Now move the foot in a counterclockwise direction. Repeat several times.

Toe rotation

This dessert both gently relaxes the toes and strengthens them at the same time as it works their muscles fully.



1 Keep the top of the foot steady with the holding hand. Grasp the big toe with the other hand. Rotate the toe slowly and evenly in a 360° clockwise circle several times.



2 Now rotate the toe in a counterclockwise direction. Use firm, even pressure with the working fingers and a slight upward pull. Apply to each of the toes.

Traction

This is a good technique for overall relaxation of the foot. It counteracts the continual compression of the foot that occurs with each footstep.

1 Grasp the foot as shown (see right). Pull the foot toward you, gently and gradually. Hold for 10–15 seconds. Release.

LEARNING TIP

As you move the ball of the foot toward you with the working hand, pull simultaneously at the ankle with the holding hand.

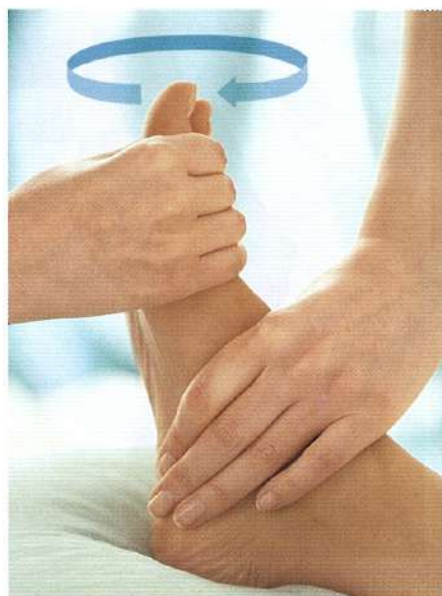


Mid-foot mover

The joint across the center of the foot is often compressed from footwear and standing for long periods of time. The net result is stress on the foot in general, as well as on the reflex areas of the mid-foot. The mid-foot mover breaks up the stress experienced by the middle of the foot.

LEARNING TIP

As you move the foot, work against the holding hand. As a variation, try bridging the ankle rather than the center of the foot.



1 Bridge your holding hand over the center of the foot, keeping it static. Grasp the ball of the foot with the other hand and move the ball of the foot 360° in a clockwise direction. Repeat several times.



2 Now turn the foot in a counterclockwise direction. Repeat several times.

STEP 1

Working the underside of the toes

Many of the reflex areas in this sequence correspond to parts of the anatomy that are responsible for directing many of the body's activities. Some of these areas, like the head and brain, gather information about the outside world. Working the reflex areas in this sequence stimulates and enhances the functions of these organs. First, examine the foot for any areas that should be avoided, and then start with the desserts below to relax the foot.

DESSERTS Side to side (p. 68) • Spinal twist (p. 69)
Lung press (p. 70) • Toe rotation (p. 72)

AREAS WORKED

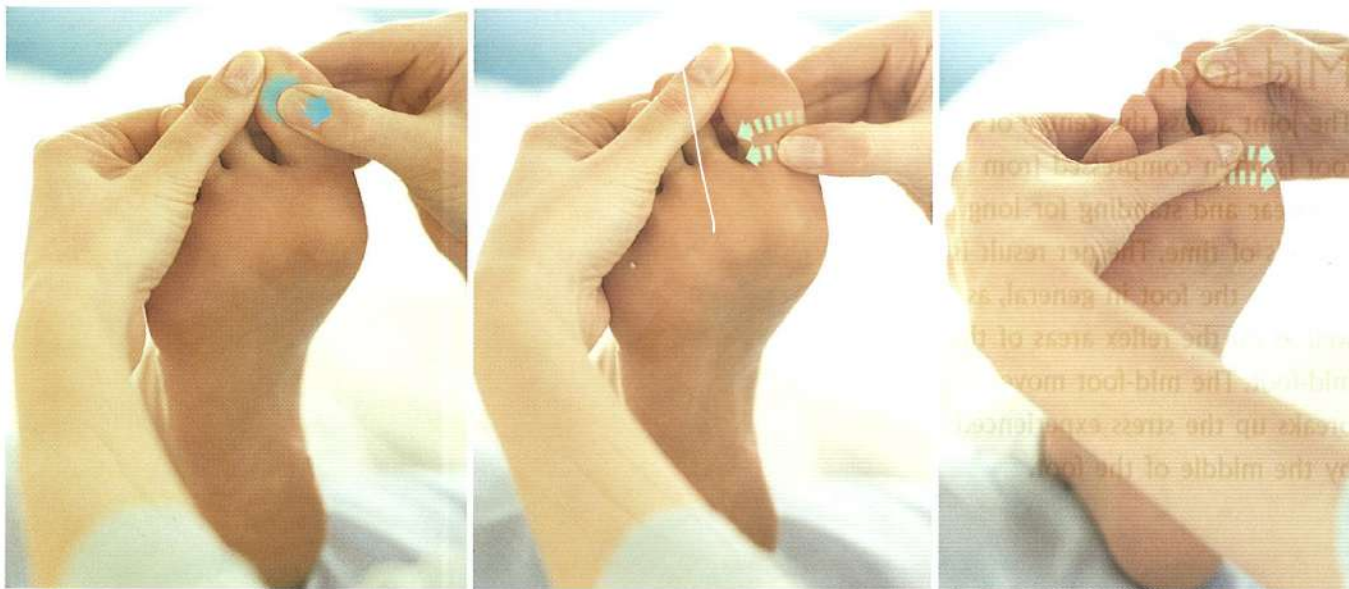
PITUITARY GLAND: This helps regulate endocrine activity such as growth and metabolism.

NECK: Highly prone to tension, it may respond well to reflexology.

THYROID & PARATHYROID GLANDS: Help to regulate energy levels, metabolism, growth, and blood calcium levels: pressure is applied to these reflex areas to enhance the functions of these glands.

HEAD & BRAIN: Control and coordinate all activity in the body, so a key part of a reflexology session.

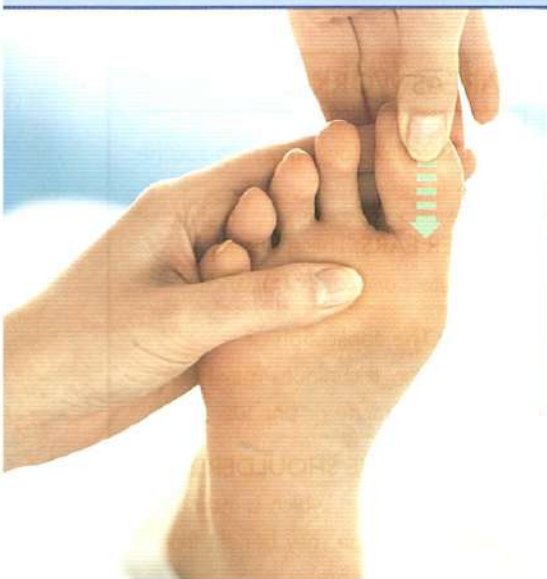
SINUSES: Reflexology work aims to keep these air-filled cavities clear.



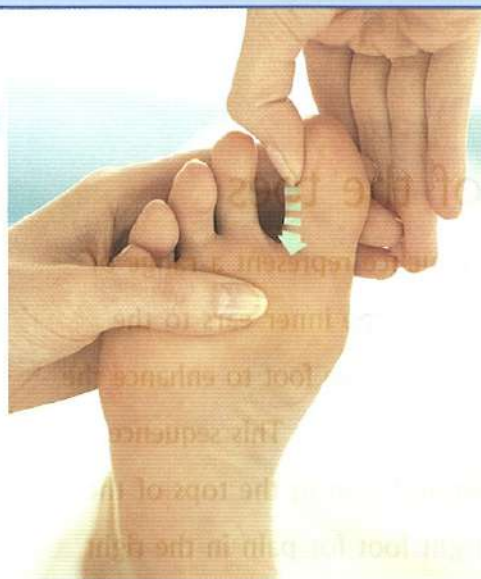
1 Hold the big toe stationary with your left hand. Rest your right thumb just beyond the PITUITARY GLAND reflex area. Hook in with the thumb and pull back across the reflex area. Repeat.

2 Next, place your right thumb on the NECK, THYROID GLAND, and PARATHYROID GLAND reflex areas. Walk across the stem of the toe using the thumb walking technique. Make at least two passes, one high and one low.

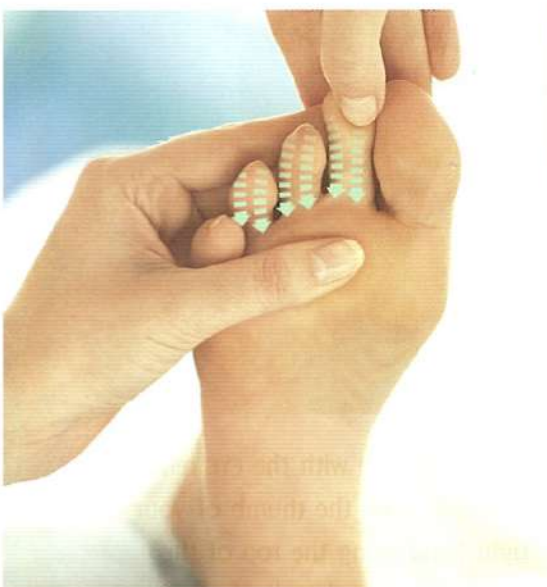
3 Change hands and walk across the stem of the toes from the other direction. Make both low and high passes. Repeat several times.



4 To work the HEAD and BRAIN, SINUS, and NECK reflex areas, first support the toes with your left hand. Now thumb walk, starting at the top center of the big toe.



5 Reposition your right thumb and walk down the side of the big toe.



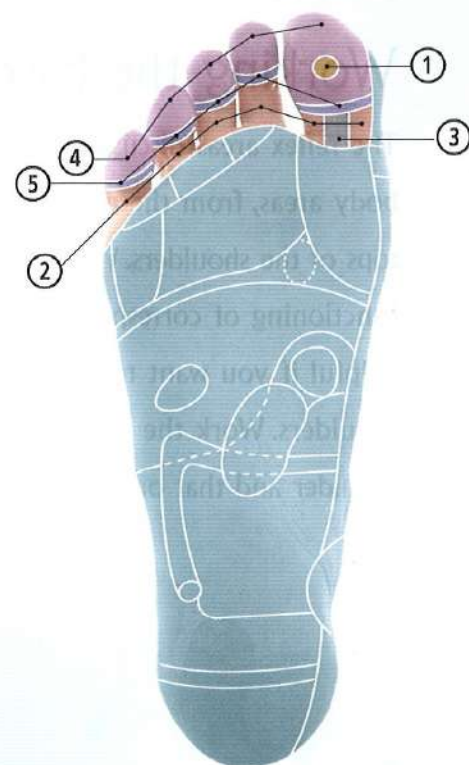
6 Next, reposition your left hand to support the second toe. Walk down the center and side of this toe. Repeat the pattern on the third and fourth toes.



7 Repeat on the little toe, then change hands. Use the right hand to support each toe and walk the left thumb down the center and the other side of each toe.

DESSERTS Side to side (p. 68) • Lung press (p. 70) • Toe rotation (p. 72)

FOOT ORIENTATION



RIGHT FOOT

The area representing the PITUITARY GLAND lies in the center of the big toe on both right and left feet (1). The toes are all mapped to mirror the body, with the NECK reflex areas lying in the section from the base of the toe to the first joint (2). On each foot this section of toe represents a portion of the neck, but on the big toes this section also overlaps with the THYROID and PARATHYROID GLAND areas (3).

The area filling the space from the first joint to the tip of each toe corresponds to the HEAD and BRAIN reflex areas (4), with those for the SINUSES (5) lying just behind each joint.

The right and left feet mirror each other identically for these reflex areas, with those on the right foot corresponding to the right half of the body and those on the left relating to the left half of the body.

STEP 2

Working the base of the toes

The reflex areas discussed in this sequence represent a range of body areas, from the eyes, the ears, and the inner ears to the tops of the shoulders. Work these areas on the foot to enhance the functioning of corresponding parts of the body. This sequence is helpful if you want to ease tension and pain in the tops of the shoulders. Work the area on the right foot for pain in the right shoulder and that on the left foot for pain in the left shoulder.

1 Wrap your left hand around the ball of the foot and pull down with the thumb to make the reflex areas more accessible.

LEARNING TIP

Do not squeeze the foot with the holding hand, because that would obscure the surface area of those reflexes. Do not hold the toes back, either, for that would tighten the skin, making it even harder to work the area.

AREAS WORKED

EYES: Reflexology may help soothe sore eyes.

INNER EARS: These organs regulate our sense of balance.

EARS: The application of reflexology techniques may help ease an earache or tinnitus.

TOPS OF THE SHOULDERS: This muscular region, which is inclined to store tension, may benefit from reflexology sessions.



2 Beginning with the EYE reflex area, walk the thumb of your right hand along the top of the ridge. Then thumb walk along the INNER EAR and EAR reflex areas, along with the reflex area for the TOPS OF THE SHOULDERS, which lies behind the other reflex areas.