**Shiatsu Massage**

Shiatsu is a popular form of Asian Bodywork Therapy (ABT) developed in Japan in the 20th century. It has ancient roots in traditional Japanese massage and Chinese medicine. **Shiatsu literally means “finger pressure.”** The manual techniques of Shiatsu are applied to the body to balance the flow of vital energy, improve health, and support healing.

Shiatsu and other forms of ABT can release stress and tension, increase vitality, strengthen immunity, relieve pain and discomfort, increase self-awareness, promote emotional balance, and address common ailments. Central to understanding Shiatsu are the concepts of Chi, energy pathways, and acupoints.

Unlike the massages of the West, where kneading and friction is used, **in Shiatsu pressure and stretching is the key.** The shiatsu practitioner uses palms, fingers, thumbs, knuckles, elbows, knees and the feet, to work on the body’s acupuncture points, along what they consider the body’s meridians or energy channels. Its a form of “touch communication,” and is a safe and effective preventive medicine. It helps to balance a persons energy flow, and strengthen the vital organs.

In shiatsu, it is believed that disease is the result of blocked or unbalanced energy, so that it’s either depleted or over-active. **Shiatsu shares the same view as Chinese acupuncture.** There are two energy forces, the Yin, or negative, and the Yang, or positive. Basically, the human body is looked upon as a microcosm of the universe, the meridians vital organs are seen as governed by Five Elements and by Yin and Yang. They believe that in a healthy person no element is dominant or deficient in relation to the other. So **blocked or unbalanced energy allows disease to take over**, and it is either depleted, or kyoto, or overactive-jitsu.

A shiatsu practitioner asks the patient to lie on a mat on the floor, while wearing loose, natural fiber clothing. He or she will then use his hands, elbows, knees, and feet to work on balancing your meridian. **Shiatsu treatments are given for a variety of ailments, from respiratory problems, to digestive problems, to headaches and leg cramps, and can bring relief to a number of everyday disorders.** And today, shiatsu is gaining popularity in the West, and is practiced in America and Europe.

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