

WINTER WELLNESS AN INTRODUCTION TO REFLEXOLOGY

by Linda Googh

What if I told you that there is a very simple and effective way to survive the hustle and bustle of the holiday season? Or, a simple and effective way to improve circulation to your extremities this chilly winter?

What if I also told you that you can take an active part in making these things happen; that you can take an active part in your own wellness? Sure, you know that a healthy diet, plenty of exercise and the right amount of sleep are very important to everyday well-being, but how about a “wellness recipe” to elevate your mood and help balance the stress of holiday shopping? The kind of recipe you can implement for daily balance and harmony to clear your mind and allow the body to recharge and realign itself. ...I’m referring to healing through reflexology!

What is Reflexology?

According to the Reflexology Association of Canada, reflexology is a natural healing art based on the principals that there are zones and reflexes in the feet, hands, ears and face that correspond to every part, gland and organ in the body. By stimulating the nerve endings, we send messages along the nerve pathways to various organs, stimulating and communicating with our body’s nerve network. This helps to balance the energies within the body.

Reflexology is a simple, safe and non-invasive treatment. Your reflexology experience will include a combination of finger, thumb palpitations and other hand moves which target key reflexes. When these moves are combined, they flow like a strategically choreographed dance routine. Some of the benefits experienced during and after a reflexology treatment include:

- The release of good feeling endorphins
- Enhanced vitality and energy
- Improved circulation
- Improved muscle tone
- Boosted immune system
- Restored balance, body, mind, and spirit
- A reduction in inflammation
- Mood elevation
- Pain Reduction
- Less Stress

All ages can benefit from this non-invasive therapy, from babies to seniors, the fittest of fit, and the chronically ill such as cancer patients and those in palliative care. The great part about reflexology is that it works harmoniously with all modalities, including modern medicine. It complements visits to the doctor, chiropractor, massage therapist and even time at the gym!

Mirror, Mirror

Our feet, hands, ears, and face mirror our bodies. They are channels of healing for all the body systems. The foot for instance is a human masterpiece of 26 bones (the same number there are in the vertebrae). When you bring your 2 feet together, a completely mapped outline of the human body appears, with the big toe representing the head, the lateral sides of the feet reflecting the shoulders, knees and hips, down to the heel which mirrors the pelvis. The curves of the feet that follow the arch line from heel to toe look just like the curves of the spine.

The face also mirrors the body. It reflects our emotions, conveys thoughts, and is the first thing people notice about us. The face is composed of muscle, skin, and nerves, just like the rest of the body. Faces are one of the first places to show signs of stress and fatigue. Our skin tone and color reflects how we feel. When we are sick, we look pale; when we are embarrassed we blush.

Hands, also known as our emotional messengers become sweaty when nervous (hence the term sweaty palms). Feet, fire up turning red (hot foot) and sometimes become very swollen (fat foot).

Professionals know how to read the road signs, right down to any changes in your finger and toe nails. A reflexology assessment starts from the minute you walk in the door. Does the client limp? What is their posture like? Rounded shoulders and a head held low may reflect pressure on the thoracic cavity and abdominal organs. These signs will be read by the reflexologist when conducting an initial assessment before the first treatment. All of this is noteworthy, and marked in the clients chart.

Color, tone, texture, and temperature are also very important indicators for various disorders. For example, yellow tones indicate excess toxins – very common in smokers! A professional reflexology therapist will take an accurate health care record. They will also map out areas of concern like calluses, foot structure, joint restrictions, as well as distortions and deformities.

Homeostasis [hoh-mee-uh-STAY-sis]

...is the state created by which the body heals itself.

Have you ever felt like you were floating on air? Or in a dream state where you were semi-asleep? This is the feeling you get during a reflexology treatment, when the body has shifted to a state of homeostasis. It is one of the only modalities that takes you there.

By applying varied amounts of pressure and palpitations to specific key reflexes, one whole being benefits. Circulation improves increasing blood flow, focus is sharpened, and your mood elevates as those good feeling endorphins are released (much like a runners high). Reflexology resets our body to a lower operating tempo, which means less wear and tear on our operating systems.

Water and Reflexology

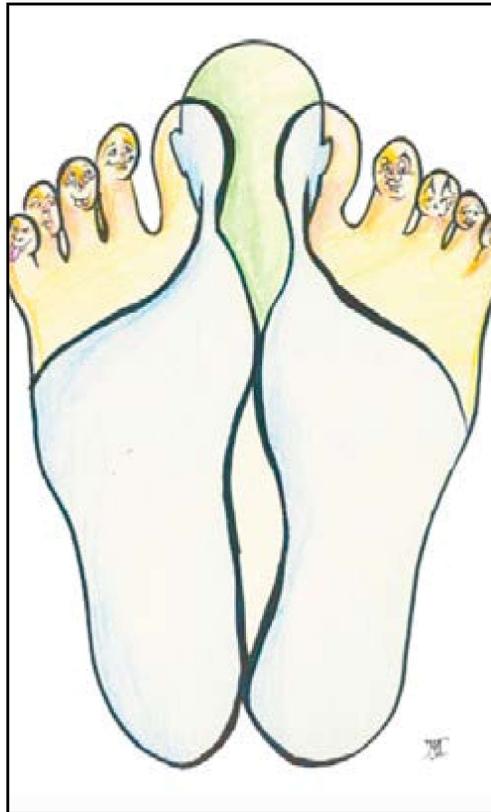
Water plays an important part in reflexology. Hydration is very important before and after reflexology treatments. Here are some important facts to keep in mind:

1/ Water is the fundamental solvent for all the body's biochemical process.

Drinking water kick starts the body's detox system to rid waste from our cells and organs.

2/ Drinking 2 ounces of water every 20 to 30 minutes is as beneficial as your daily intake of 8 glasses of water.

By drinking 2 ounces of water, frequently all day, you are more likely to consume the required amount. The hydration benefits are the same, plus most people find they will urinate more frequently in a balanced daily rhythm. If you are feeling pressured by having to drink large glasses at a time, this is a very good option!



3/ Drink water after a reflexology treatment or after performing self-reflexology.

Water and reflexology are the ideal partnership for eliminating toxins from the body. We know water flushes waste and toxins, but when you add the benefits of reflexology, our detox system multiplies this cleansing action!

4/ Water can be used as therapy.

Water on the outside of the body can be just as beneficial as water we consume. There are various forms of hydrotherapy, such as pool physiotherapy, hot and cold water treatments, and even water sports for some rehabilitation such as swimming.

5/ Water and reflexology both help to balance energies within the body.

Both enhance our vitality and energy, improve circulation, restore, and help to realign our body's internal and external systems, reducing inflammation, pain, and stress.

6/ Reflexology and drinking water help to relieve water retention.

Reflexology helps to improve lymph drainage, as well as pooled fluids held in the soft tissues, joints and body cavities. Drinking water can help the body release fluids. It is hard to wrap your head around this contradicting concept, that drinking water helps water retention. When we are dehydrated, our body protects itself by storing fluid, which is often misplaced and leaves us with the feeling of swelling and bloating. When we are properly hydrated, our body can do its job, by regulating the body's temperature, lubricating our joints and nourishing our skin and internal body systems. In a nut shell, water transports nutrients that give us energy and keep us healthy. The healing combination of water and reflexology is an elixir of life.

My Unexpected Journey into Reflexology

I was producing and choreographing a production for Yamaha Canada at Deerhurst Resort on hard concrete floors. Prior to this, I had been working non-stop on projects and my feet had been burning! That night, I had to change into a long gown and gorgeous high heels (of course!), to call the show and attend the after party. My wardrobe lady noticed my toes had poked through the compression hose I was wearing on account of my tired legs. She asked me, "should I just sew them up?" I said, "yes, but hurry!" ...I should have said cut me open!

I strangulated the nerves in both my feet and they went numb. But I ignored it. All I knew was I had to get through the job, and not feeling my feet meant they didn't hurt anymore! The strangulation was only half of it; I had caused anything and everything that could happen to feet, all in one moment of stupidity! The extensive nerve damage and temporary paralyzation presented quite the drama! My world was forever changed, and it was a very long ride back to wellness.

Crying on my deck that summer while reading (you guessed it) an article about the benefits of reflexology, I was hit on the head with an Angel hammer! The moment was profound, and yes, it was an “ah-ha” moment with bells ringing! I had no idea that article was my turning point, and that through the art and science of reflexology and self-reflexology I would be the biggest part of my own healing!

It was not a quick fix by any means, and nothing beats a great reflexology treatment with a dedicated and knowledgeable reflexology therapist. During most of my reflexology studies and training, I was able to administer treatments to others, but not receive them, as the severe nerve damage and other complications caused me too much pain. My very smart teacher then introduced me to self-reflexology, showing me how the various reflexology hand moves and techniques could be altered and adapted so that I could work on myself, thus the term self-reflexology. Once that severe nerve pain lessened, I was then able to be touched by others. Only then was I able to include professional treatments. The combination of receiving a treatment along with the knowledge of self-reflexology cleared the path which led the rest of the way on my healing journey.

Know How To Pick' Em

Choosing a reflexologist is a matter of personal choice. However, there are some important questions you may want to ask to help your decision.

- Are you Certified and Registered? If so, with what Reflexology Association? What is your designation?
- Are you certified in feet only? Or, do you have other certification such as hands and ears?
- Is your member number/registration on your receipts? Who are you insured with?
- How long have you been in practice?
- Do you have any references?

Red Flag

If anyone answers, " I am certified, but gave up my membership in the (related association)..."**RUN!** This means they are not in the continuing education program which keeps their designation such as the one I hold - RCRT / RAC (Registered Certified Reflexology Therapist / Reflexology Association of Canada).

The red flag may also mean free range activities, including the use of sharp instruments which reflexologists do not use. Beware! When they do not have a designation or an association, they most likely do not carry the required insurance.

Take Charge

Whether you aim for more sleep, more exercise and time at the gym or healthier eating, mix it up with a holistic modality like reflexology. More and more people are taking responsibility for their own health and well-being by actively participating in their own daily wellness. Holistic healing is not intended to serve as a band-aid or a one-time fix. It is an ongoing journey in search of more answers and ultimately living better, being healthier, and striving for wholeness. Remember, you are in charge of you! Recharge, rejuvenate, realign and relax this holiday season. Wishing you wellness!

Reflexology Therapist and Corporate Wellness Speaker, Linda Gough RCRT is the author of Reflexology2Go - self-healing recipes for daily wellness. Reflexology2Go video series can be seen on Rogers Cable TV in York and Durham Region. Linda is a teacher and examiner with the Reflexology Association of Canada, with a private practice in Aurora, Ontario. She offers mobile services to the elderly, and those suffering with chronic illness, cancer, and palliative care.

Name that Pain

Tick off all the diseases and conditions that apply to you, and get **one point for each**.

- Headaches
- Joint Pain
- Thyroid Disorder
- Depression
- Heel Spurs
- Flat Feet
- Allergies
- Arthritis
- Asthma
- Hypertension
- Colitis
- Cystitis
- Prostate Conditions
- Urinary Track Infections
- Back Pain
- Bunions
- Bursitis
- Mortons Neuroma
- Hammer Toe
- Planta Facilitas
- Tendonitis
- Sciatica
- Diabetes
- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
- Sinusitis
- Stress
- Fatigue
- Immune Disorders

If you scored **5 points or less** you are among a minority of people. For those scoring **6 points and over** you are not alone, that's for sure! Fortunately, all of these different diseases and conditions can benefit from reflexology treatments. (And this is just a partial list!)