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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**TAKE A HANDS ON' APPROACH:**  
*The Therapeutic & Relaxation Benefits of Massage*

TUPELO, Miss.—For pain, muscle aches or simply to reduce stress, sometimes the best solution is a “hands on” approach—literally.

Massage has been used for centuries to help the body recover from vigorous activity, and ancient cultures used massage to cure disease and improve health. While most people get a massage to relieve the negative effects of stress, massage has many health benefits as well.

“Massage positively affects every system in the body,” said licensed massage therapist Teresa Carroll of North Mississippi Medical Center’s Iuka Wellness Center. “The therapeutic benefits have been proven.” Massage reduces the heart rate, lowers blood pressure, relaxes muscles, improves range of motion and increases endorphins, the body’s natural painkillers.

“When a muscle gets tight, it shortens and the body pulls in the direction of the shortened muscle,” Carroll said. “Deep tissue massage can help decrease pain by softening, lengthening and repositioning a person’s muscles.”

**Healing Hands**

Becky Brabham, a licensed massage therapist with the NMMC-West Point Wellness Center, said for this reason she often treats patients who have previously undergone surgery, especially rotator cuff surgery. “The muscles in the surrounding area are so tight,” she said. “Massage can help with muscle tension and range of motion.”

Individuals with arthritis and fibromyalgia benefit from massage therapy, as do those suffering from sinus problems. “Massage is also a big benefit for cancer patients who are dealing with pain from the cancer and the stress of having cancer,” Brabham said.

Many of Brabham’s clients are weekend warriors who simply overdo it. “I see a lot of people with soreness and stiffness in the early summer and fall after tackling yard work and gardening,” she said.

Several body functions benefit from massage therapy—including circulation, digestion and the nervous system. “The therapist’s hands help push the blood throughout the body. When you improve circulation it helps remove more cellular waste from the body too,” Carroll said.

“It’s like giving you a bath on the inside. Our body does this on its own anyway, but sometimes our body just needs a little help.”

Carroll said massage can even help skin conditions. “Massage brings blood into the tissue, and the oxygen in the blood helps improve your skin,” she said. “Massage stimulates your body’s oil glands and can help dry skin.” Patients with eczema, a chronic skin disorder characterized by scaly and itchy rashes, can see dramatic improvement from having a therapist massage Shea butter into affected areas, which often include elbows and the bends of the knees.

### **Finding Your Comfort Zone**

Despite all the physical and emotional health benefits, some people remain leery about having a massage. “I always explain to new clients that massage therapy is very respectful,” Carroll said. “I explain that the only body part exposed will be what I’m working on at the time, and everything else will be covered by a sheet. I always want the client to tell me if they want me to apply more pressure or less pressure. I try to diffuse some of their anxieties from the get-go.”

Brabham recommends that anyone who is apprehensive about getting a massage start with a half-hour upper body session.

Both therapists agree that most clients are hooked after their first massage. “When clients no longer have to come back to me for pain relief, they come back for the wellness of it,” Brabham said.

Carroll added, “People often say, ‘Why haven’t I gotten this before!’”

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### **Sidebar:**

#### **A Massage for Every Body**

The NMMC Wellness Centers offer several types of massages, including:

#### **Swedish**

The full body massage is designed to reduce injury, alleviate inflammation and maintain muscles in their best state of relaxation and flexibility.

#### **Deep Tissue/Sports Massage**

This massage uses a combination of Swedish techniques to affect the deeper layer of muscle that relieves chronic pain and soreness and releases pain associated with stress. Various types of stretching are involved.

#### **Hot Stone Massage**

Experience a relaxing massage with deep heat therapy. Smooth polished lava stones are heated and incorporated into the massage. Hot stone massage is the perfect treatment to loosen tight muscles, relieve stress and release tension.

**Prenatal Massage**

A gentle and relaxing massage which provides a comforting and relaxing experience for the mother-to-be. Using a specifically designed cushion, the therapist can adapt the massage for any stage of pregnancy.

To learn more about the massage therapy services available at the NMMC Wellness Centers in Baldwin, Iuka, Pontotoc, Tupelo and West Point, call 1-800-THE DESK (800-843-3375) or visit or visit [www.nmhs.net/wellness\\_centers.php](http://www.nmhs.net/wellness_centers.php).