

[IMAGE]

## **Cedars-Sinai Examines Effects of Swedish Massage**

While many studies have been done about the effects of massage therapy on various health conditions, still not much is known about how massage therapy works on a biological level. Researchers at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, the David Geffen School of Medicine and the University of California Los Angeles examined how one session of Swedish massage therapy (defined as a form of massage using long strokes, kneading, deep circular movements, vibration and tapping) effected the body's hormonal response and immune function.

Fifty three healthy adults were randomly assigned to receive either one session of Swedish massage or one session of light touch (defined as the therapist using a light touch with the back of the hand). Both sessions lasted 45 minutes and were performed by licensed practitioners. Blood samples were taken before and after each session and were used to determine blood levels of certain hormones and circulating white blood cells. Researchers discovered that participants who received Swedish massage had a significant decrease in the hormone called arginine-vasopressin, which plays a role in regulating blood pressure and water retention, as compared to those in the light touch sessions.

Swedish Massage - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark The study found no significant differences between the two groups for the stress hormone cortisol. Significant decreases in proteins called cytokines were also found for the Swedish massage group as compared to the light touch group. In review this preliminary data, researchers concluded, "that a single session of Swedish massage produces measurable biological effects and may have an effect on the immune system. However, more research is needed to determine the specific mechanisms and pathways behind these changes."

With more and more patients looking for non-surgical, non-pharmaceutical treatment options, hospitals such as Cedars-Sinai and many others are looking into the positive effects massage therapy can have for their patients.

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