

[IMAGE]

## Massage Therapy Reduces Hand Pain

Research on the effects of massage therapy for various conditions is increasing. Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice has published a study conducted at the University of Miami School of Medicine in which Tiffany Field and colleagues examined how massage therapy affects hand pain.

The researchers recruited 46 participants from the medical school who complained of hand pain regardless of the cause, such as arthritis or carpal tunnel syndrome. Most noted that their hand pain was related to computer use. They were randomly assigned to the massage therapy group or the control group.

The massage therapy group received 15 minutes of hand massage from a massage therapist once a week for four weeks. The hand massage procedure included four techniques: stroking, milking, friction and skin rolling. They were also taught home massage, although this procedure was not described. Both massage and control participants completed assessments before and after their first and last sessions. Assessments included pain (0-10 Visual Analog Scale), grip strength, the State Anxiety Inventory, depression (the Profile of Mood States) and the Sleep Disturbances Scale. The control group received no massage but was given the hand massage instructions after the final assessment.

Hand Pain - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark After four weeks of treatment, Field and colleagues reported that the massage group had decreased pain, increased grip strength, decreased anxiety and decreased depression. The researchers concluded, "These findings are consistent with data on massage therapy with pain syndromes and especially with results from our carpal tunnel syndrome study in which pain was also decreased and grip strength increased by massage therapy. The psychological changes following hand massage in the present study, including the reduction in depressed mood and anxiety are indications of relaxation effects."

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