

Thai Massage

An Asian technique for body and soul

Massages are in, and not just for medical reasons. Nowadays they have become a critical part of wellness treatments for body and soul, but the varieties of massage are almost limitless. There are a flood of terms, like Thai, acupressure, Pilates, yoga, hot stone, lomi lomi, to mention just a few. One asks oneself, what does all this

mean? With so many different types on offer even the avowed wellness fan may have trouble keeping up with the most current trend. Physiotherapist Anika Hölting will be introducing you to many of these varieties in this new series and also introducing the subject of wellness.

At the moment one of the most popular treatments at trend-oriented spas is Thai massage. Thai massage is fascinating due to its combination of acupressure and reflex zone massages as well as its deep stretching of individual muscle groups, accomplished with the use of the hands, arms and feet.

This type of massage focuses on the ten 'sen', the energy lines in the body, similar to the meridians found in Chinese acupuncture. In contrast to the Chinese acupressure, where individual pressure points are stimulated, the pressure in Thai massage occurs in flow of movement along the energy lines. This means that the therapist constantly combines various intensive stretches while working pressure points.

Communication between the client and therapist is naturally very important to help both in the search for joint blockages and muscle shortening.

Diseases where Thai massage can be helpful include, for example, hip and shoulder pain due to the shortening of muscles and the symptoms of too much stress on the spine due to bad posture and sitting too long.

In order to increase the efficacy of the treatment, it is possible to combine elements from manual therapy and osteopathy.

Naturally there are some times where caution is to be advised. These include acute illnesses, like herniated discs, hip operations and torn ligaments. Thai massage cannot work miracles and can even be counterproductive in these cases. A competent physiotherapist will naturally talk to you before treatment and provide advice. In case of doubt, ask a trusted physician.

Thai massage is not only a favourite treatment for more athletic people and the body conscious amongst us or the young and active, but also those who prefer a lot of pressure or a gradually adapted technique. Thai massage is the probably the best treatment for a well-relaxed musculature and for the strengthening of connective tissues and the immune system, not to mention an improvement of the ability to stretch over the long term. ▣



Loosening of the pectoral girdle through dynamic stretching and additional pressure between the shoulder blade and the spine with the elbow



Relaxation of the whole back musculature, deepening of the breathing and stimulation of the digestive tract. Additionally the thoracic spine, frequently limited in its movement, is also properly aligned



From a stable side position the shoulder joint is stretched in its natural radius of movement; at the same time the shoulder blade, through the ball of the hand and pressure with the thumb, released of its congestion. The therapist should pay especially close attention to the mobility and pain in order not to hurt the patient. This is an effective exercise to release tension in the area of the thoracic spine and the shoulder blades



The stationary leg is, with help of the therapist's own weight, brought into a hip stretch. This stretches shortened muscles on the back of the leg as well as the buttocks. This is especially helpful for those who frequently sit and for problems of the lower back



Intensive stretching of the back of the right leg and the often-shortened hip muscles of the left leg. Additionally acupressure points on the energy lines are being pressed to break up blockages and congestion

Left: Mobilisation and stretching of the lumbar and lower spine. This exercise is only for healthy spine!



Anika Hölting,

Licensed physiotherapist: she has worked in the spas on the Aida and A'Rosa Blu cruise liners, hotel spas in Austria and physiotherapy practices. Last year she was the director of the massage-spa area of the five star hotel Kempinski Grand Hotel in Heiligendamm. She is always looking for new challenges and techniques so she regularly travels to Asia in order to present her clients with a wider range of techniques. Her services can be booked for hotels or private clients on Ibiza (including house calls).