

# REFLEXOLOGY: Ancient Preventative Medicine

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**R**eflexology is an ancient art form. It is widely believed that it was practiced in China 5,000 years ago. The oldest documentation of reflexology was unearthed in Egypt through pictographs dated around 2500-2330 BC. Ancient people saw the practice as preventative medicine. The Cherokee Indians of North Carolina have long acknowledged the importance of the feet in maintaining balance and health. The women of the Bear Clan who practiced reflexology were known as the "moon maidens." Jenny Wallace, a native of the back hills of the Alleghenies, says: *"The feet walk upon the earth and through this your spirit is connected to the universe."* Inge Dougan, a pioneer in blending reflexology with Chinese meridian lines states, *"Energy is the basis for all life and a vital factor in healing. A more comprehensive knowledge of energy will enhance one's understanding of the interconnectedness of all things in the universe."*

### **So how does using acupressure on the feet improve health?**

The goal of reflexology is to trigger a return to a state of equilibrium. Relaxation is the first step to normalization and reflexology is designed to induce a deep state of relaxation. When the body is relaxed it begins to align and heal. Negative emotions, like anxiety, grief, fear and worry cause chemical changes in the body that erode our health. Approximately 70% of disorders are related to stress and nervous tension. Reflexology is a powerful antidote to stress.

### **What is a reflex action?**

A reflex is an unconscious or involuntary response to a stimulus. In reflexology, pressure is applied to trigger points which activate an electrochemical nerve impulse that is conducted to the central nervous system via a sensory (afferent) neuron. This message is received by the ganglion and is transmitted via a mo-

tor (efferent) neuron which then causes a response. Reflexology, by stimulating thousands of nerve endings in the feet, encourages the opening and clearing of neural pathways.

### **How does reflexology affect circulation?**

Eunice Ingham's favorite saying was, *"Circulation is life. Stagnation is death."* The expansion and constriction of blood vessels is essential to the level of oxygen and nutrients reaching the organs and tissues of the body. It is also necessary for the release of toxins from the bloodstream. The increased state of relaxation during a treatment aids the excretory systems, as well as, stimulating the flow of blood through the body. Studies have proven that reflexology helps to normalize blood pressure.

### **How does the endocrine system factor in?**

The endocrine system is an intricate network of glands that secrete hormones directly into the blood. Hormones are powerful chemical substances that affect every bodily activity. If any of the seven principal glands is disrupted, the whole body is thrown off balance. Thoughts and emotions are affected by the glands and personality is determined by glandular function. When gland function is harmonious, one will have a positive outlook. If it is disharmonious, one will become depressed. Reflexology, by stimulating the electrical energy, has a subsidiary effect on chemical energy.

### **What if I am in too much pain to relax?**

The body produces its own painkillers known as endorphins - which are five to ten times stronger than morphine. According to the "Gate Theory," the nervous system can only respond to a limited amount of sensory information at one time. When the nervous system becomes overloaded it short-circuits, or closes

a gate, reducing the amount of sensory information available for processing. The application of reflexology encourages the body to produce more endorphins while the pressure confuses the body with too many sensations, which closes the “pain gates”. Combining breath work and reflexology helps to move through pain. Repeated sessions reduce the pain as the body comes back into alignment and fewer triggers respond.

### **If a reflexology closes the pain gates, then why is a treatment sometimes painful?**

Grainy crystal deposits, which cause pain during a treatment, are believed to be calcium deposits that have settled beneath the skin surface at the nerve endings. Excess acidity in the bloodstream increases calcium deposits in any organ in the body. These crystals impede the circulation of blood flow. The feet are a prime target for these deposits because of the many nerve endings there. The blood flow has to be circulated back from the feet against gravity causing deposits to settle. Restrictive shoes further impact this situation. Reflexology helps to break down these deposits and increase the circulation necessary to remove the residue through the elimination systems.

### **What about the benefits of reflexology to the spiritual body?**

Our feet also play a major role in our spiritual health. They connect us with the earth and its telluric currents. The feet serve as antennae for the electromagnetic currents flowing to and from the earth. Keeping your feet cleansed helps to serve as a conduit of this energy. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. The feet represent the physical plane which we have to transcend in order to gain access to higher planes. The solar plexus is a part of the sympathetic nervous system and an umbilical chord to nature. You can feel the connection between your feet and your solar plexus. When your feet are cold you can feel a tightening of the solar plexus. Stimulating the feet not only increases physical circulation it serves as a means

of opening the crown chakra. Reflexology helps to break up stagnant energy on an etheric, as well as, physical level.

### **Why treat yourself to a reflexology session?**

The answer is simple, to enhance your mind, body, spirit connection. 