

## Thai Massage

### Movement and Massage Makes for a Unique Experience

A slow dance--that's how many have described the ancient work known as Thai massage, a modality that incorporates the tenets of yoga with massage and mindfulness. Accessible for just about everyone, Thai massage relies on the partnership between client and practitioner to facilitate therapeutic movement.

#### Historical Roots

Developed more than 2,000 years ago in Thailand, Thai massage remains a popular technique that incorporates aspects of yoga, acupressure, energy balancing, and massage. Considered one of the ancient healing arts of traditional Thai medicine (which also included

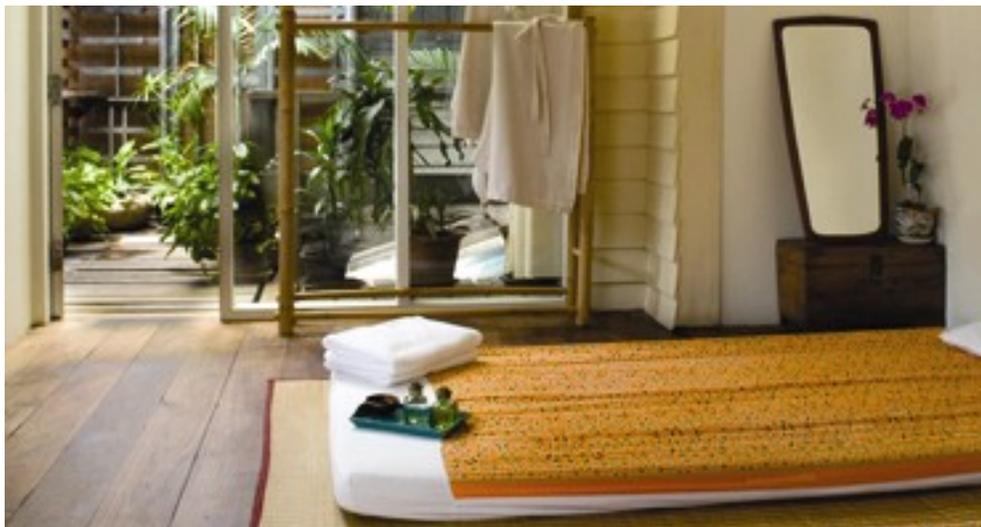
Pho monastery in Bangkok. Today, Thai massage continues to be a mainstay in Thai medicine, while quickly gaining a new audience in the Western world.

#### What is Thai Massage?

Also known as yoga massage, assisted yoga, ancient massage, and assorted other names, Thai massage respects the body's limits, while encouraging clients to reach their edge of flexibility, but never beyond. Thai massage incorporates acupressure, massage, and passive-assisted stretching, where therapists help clients move into their stretch. The work is purposely slow as the therapist guides clients through the movements, being ever mindful of their

*Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity.*

-Hippocrates



Performed on a floor mat, Thai massage encompasses acupressure, massage, and stretching.

herbal practice, nutrition, and spiritual meditation), Thai massage was originally passed from teacher to teacher within the Buddhist temples, while Thai families used it as a healing folk art. Unfortunately, much of the history of Thai massage was lost during the Burmese invasion of Thailand in 1767, although some of the traditions remain inscribed on the stone walls of the Wat

physical limitations. Some say the combination of movements and focused awareness during a Thai massage session creates what looks like a slow, flowing dance between practitioner and client.

Thai massage is based on an energetic paradigm of the human body and mind.

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#### Office Hours and Contact

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In this tradition, energy is thought to travel on pathways, called *sen*, throughout the body. The specific points of energy along those pathways are called *nadis*. Through movement and massage components, the goal in Thai massage is to ensure energy is flowing freely along these pathways as a means for wellness.

Unlike traditional massage, Thai massage is performed on a soft floor mat. It can be adapted to a massage table, however, for the more frail and elderly. Clients are clothed in loose, comfortable attire suitable for the deep stretching that will be part of the session. This interactive form of bodywork can utilize tai chi, rocking and rhythmic motion, massage, and assisted stretching. Don't be surprised if practitioners use their hands, feet, knees, elbows, and legs to facilitate the process; pillows and bolsters may also be used for better client support. No oil is used during these sessions; however heated, herbal compresses are often incorporated to enhance movement and warm the muscles.

## Exploring the Benefits of Thai Massage

As with traditional massage, Thai massage offers numerous benefits:

- Deep relaxation.
- Quieting of the mind.
- Heightened energy levels.
- Improved circulation.
- Improved lymphatic flow.
- Improved range of motion.
- Increased flexibility.
- Rejuvenated body and mind.
- Relief for pain and muscle tension.
- Enhanced body-mind connection.

Experts say there is an interesting dichotomy that exists within Thai massage, as it both relaxes and rejuvenates. After a session, some Thai massage clients report feeling awakened and energized, while simultaneously feeling deeply grounded and at peace.

## The Yoga Component

Recipients of Thai massage can also capture the well-established benefits of yoga without actually doing yoga. As the practitioner gently moves clients into yoga-like poses, tight joints are opened, energy flows freely, and breathing is enhanced. A meditative state becomes

part of the process, as both client and practitioner focus on breath and intention.

Through the assisted stretches, clients' muscles become less prone to injury, their joints have a greater range of motion, and their whole body enjoys greater flexibility. In addition to its acceptance among nurses, massage therapists, bodyworkers, and physical therapists, many yoga enthusiasts are finding that Thai massage adds a whole new dimension to their practice.

Conversely, if you're wanting to explore yoga but may be intimidated or not sure where to begin, Thai massage is a great introduction. It can give you a sense of how yoga works with the body, how it's practiced, and how the body will respond. Your practitioner may also be able to recommend yoga classes suited for your needs.

## Communication is Key

As with any form of massage or bodywork, it's paramount that Thai massage clients communicate with their therapists throughout the session. Is the massage pressure too deep? Does the stretch no longer feel good? Is the room too hot? Be sure to let the therapist know if something is not quite right so he or she can deliver the best, most therapeutic work possible and you can experience the full benefits of your Thai massage session.

Young or old, healthy or frail, Thai massage offers something for everyone. Whether you're a weekend warrior needing to work out the aches and pains of excess, or a retiree needing to awaken and invigorate an aging body through movement and stretching, the therapeutic nature of Thai massage can address your needs.



The therapist guides the client through the movements in a slow, flowing, yoga-type dance.

# A Walking Workout

## Have Fun While Burning More Calories

Imagine the lone hiker, backpack laden with sleeping bag and bedroll, wielding a well-worn walking stick as she climbs the side of a snow-covered mountain. For centuries, trekkers have used walking sticks, partly as a defense against attacking wildlife, partly to aid in balance, and partly as support on long, arduous climbs. But in recent years, many hikers have replaced the single wooden walking stick with hiking poles.

Held in both hands and used to distribute weight more evenly through the four limbs, wilderness hikers have found poles invaluable for safety, efficiency, and comfort on long hikes. What wilderness hikers have known for some time now is that walking poles are a great way to relieve pressure on knees, ankles, and the back. They encourage better posture and provide a total body workout by engaging the upper body.

Now, hiking poles are showing up in urban areas as fitness walkers discover the benefits they provide. Nordic walking--similar in technique to cross-

country skiing--is a great way to get a whole body workout, increase oxygen consumption, and burn more calories than regular walking or even speed walking. This total body workout burns 40 percent more calories and consumes 25 percent more oxygen. Poles can be purchased at most outdoor sporting stores, along with rubber tips for use on paved paths.

### TECHNIQUE

Adjust your poles to approximately 70 percent of your height and loosely secure the straps around your wrists. Hold the poles at an angle behind you so they propel you forward with a slight bend at the elbow. Use an opposite hand-and-heel motion as you walk--right heel strikes as left pole tip contacts the ground. And you're on your way! Don't be shy with your poles. Remember: You're burning 40 percent more calories.

For more information, visit [www.walking.about.com/od/nordicwalking/index.htm](http://www.walking.about.com/od/nordicwalking/index.htm).



Add walking poles, and burn more calories.

# Exercise Myths

## Fiction Vs. Fact

Although old fitness fictions like "no pain, no gain" are fading fast, plenty of misconceptions still exist. Following are some of the most common myths, counteracted by the latest research.

**FICTION:** YOU WILL BURN MORE FAT IF YOU EXERCISE LONGER AT A LOWER INTENSITY.

**FACT:** The most important focus in exercise and weight control is how many calories are burned during the activity. The faster you walk, step or run, the more calories you use per minute. However, high-intensity exercise may be more difficult to sustain.

**FICTION:** IF YOU'RE NOT GOING TO WORK OUT HARD AND OFTEN, EXERCISE IS A WASTE OF TIME.

**FACT:** Any exercise is better than none. For example, regular walking or gardening for as little as an hour a week has been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease.

**FICTION:** IF YOU EXERCISE LONG AND HARD ENOUGH, YOU WILL ALWAYS GET THE RESULTS YOU WANT.

**FACT:** In reality, genetics plays an important role in how people respond to exercise. Your development of strength, speed, and endurance may be very different from that of other people you know.

**FICTION:** THE HEALTH AND FITNESS BENEFITS OF MIND-BODY EXERCISE LIKE T'AI CHI AND YOGA ARE QUESTIONABLE.

**FACT:** The benefits abound! T'ai Chi,

for example, has been shown to help treat low-back pain and fibromyalgia. Improved flexibility, strength, and stress management are just some of the benefits.

**FICTION:** HOME WORKOUTS ARE FINE, BUT GOING TO A GYM IS THE BEST WAY TO GET FIT.

**FACT:** Some people find it easier to stick to a home-based fitness program. In spite of all the hype on trendy exercise programs and facilities, the best program for you is the one you will participate in consistently.

This information was provided by IDEA, [www.ideafit.com](http://www.ideafit.com).

*Whatever words  
we utter should  
be chosen with  
care, for people  
will hear them  
and be  
influenced by  
them, for good  
or ill.*

-Buddha

The way you think, the way you behave, the way you eat can influence your life by 30 to 50 years.

Deepak Chopra

Massage can help you manage your stress levels. Massage is not only effective in decreasing muscle pain but lowers blood pressure and elevates mood.

Schedule your massage today.

Mention you saw this edition of newsletter and receive \$10 off your massage.

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