

# KEEP IN TOUCH

## Benefits of Massage for Persons with Parkinson's and their Loved Ones



**Written By:**  
**Nicole Ouellette, RMT**

*Massage can be a great tool for relaxation, pain relief, easing muscle tension and more. But what, exactly, is massage therapy? According to the Cleveland Clinic, "Performed by a licensed massage therapist, massage therapy involves using different pressures, movements and techniques to manipulate muscles and other soft tissues in the body."*

*People with Parkinson's are subjected to the continuous trembling and contraction of their muscles, with virtually no opportunity to rest, relax, and/or recover. Because of this, some people with Parkinson's (and Care Partners!) have long recognized the benefits of massage therapy and have incorporated this option as a part of their health and wellness routine. Below, Registered Massage Therapist, Nicole Ouellette goes over some of the benefits of massage.*

*- Brandi La Bonte*

Almost anyone can tell you that massage is relaxing and loosens tight muscles, however there are several physical and mental benefits that are not so widely known.



Swedish, or relaxation, massage therapy is known to decrease stress, anxiety, and depression, while creating a greater sense of wellbeing. Quality of sleep improves, as well as joint health and range of motion. Massage decreases pain and blood pressure, and improves circulation, digestion, and the elimination of waste and toxins. Blood flow to the brain is increased, muscles stiffness is reduced, and there can be improved mobility in some people. And frankly, massage just feels really, really good.

Researcher Dr. Tiffany Field at the National Institute of Health in Miami, Florida, has found that, with individuals with Parkinson’s, “... sleep disturbances, pain, fatigue, anxiety and depressive symptoms have been demonstrated to be improved upon different massage techniques...”, and “Massage therapy seems to induce relaxation in most cases...”.

**The Parkinson’s Resource Organization states that “research has shown that massage can improve gait speed by 10%”.**

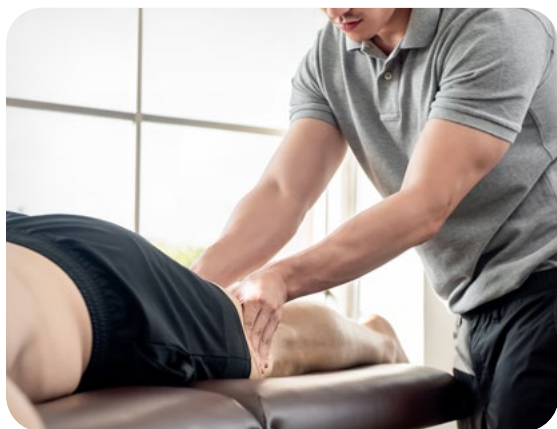
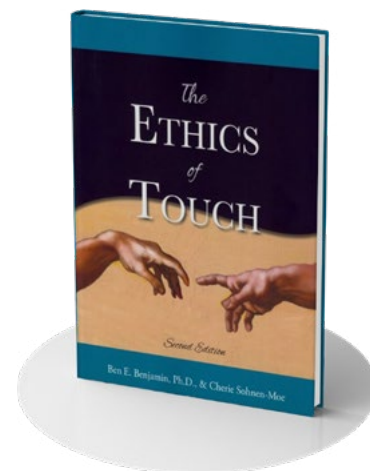
Let’s not forget that alongside the Parkinson’s sufferer, there is often also a primary caregiver, whether that be a spouse, a sibling, or an adult child. Stress, anxiety, frustration, and burnout are common occurrences among caregivers. Massage therapy offers the same wonderful benefits while resetting the heightened nervous system and promoting a more relaxed state.

Consider these statements from “The Ethics of Touch” by Ben E. Benjamin, Ph.D., and Cherie Sohmen-Moe, 2003.

**“Touch is essential in infancy; it is vital in adulthood.” p. 108.**

**“...receiving touch that is pleasurable, safe, and appropriate reduces sickness, depression...” p. 107.**

**“A parasympathetic nervous system response from being touched lowers blood pressure, increases digestion, slows breathing, and generally makes us feel more relaxed and at ease.” p. 108.**



The best treatment approach for achieving these amazing benefits is with full body Relaxation Massage. If you have never received massage before, it is important that you know that you are in charge of your treatment. Feel confident in requesting the pressure you prefer, the body areas you wish to be treated (and those that you don’t), the type of music you’d prefer, and if you would like a silent or chatty session.

Adding regular massage therapy to your repertoire of modalities will undoubtedly enhance your overall physical and mental wellness.





# TO THE POINT

## Acupuncture & Parkinson's

*Written By: Brienne Leclaire*

Acupuncture, an ancient practice rooted in Traditional Chinese Medicine, has gained recognition as a complementary therapy that can offer benefits and symptom management to individuals with Parkinson disease. While further research is needed to fully understand the mechanisms by which acupuncture might benefit those with Parkinson's, the existing evidence and real-life success stories are promising. For individuals living with Parkinson's and their care partners, exploring acupuncture as a complementary therapy under the guidance of a trained acupuncturist may provide a valuable addition to their overall treatment plan. Let's explore how acupuncture works and the potential benefits it offers to people living with Parkinson's.

### How Acupuncture Works

Acupuncture has been practiced for over two millennia and is deeply rooted in the philosophy of traditional Chinese medicine. The primary principle of acupuncture is the flow of vital energy or "Qi" (pronounced "chee") throughout the body. It is believed that any disruption in the flow of Qi can lead to imbalances and subsequent health issues. Acupuncture seeks to restore the balance by inserting thin, sterile needles at specific points on the body, known as acupuncture points or meridians. These points are believed to be interconnected, forming a network that regulates the flow of energy. By stimulating these points, acupuncture aims to

promote the body's natural ability to heal and regulate its internal processes. Acupuncture operates on the principle that stimulating these specific acupuncture points can improve the flow of energy and release the body's own natural painkillers, such as endorphins. Benefits are temporary and regular treatments are necessary to sustain them.

Western practitioners of acupuncture have alternate theories as to the mechanism of action of acupuncture. One theory is that the acupuncture leads to the release of endorphins, or brain chemicals that can trigger a sense of wellness. Another is that acupuncture reduces inflammation in the body.

## The Benefits of Acupuncture in Relation to Parkinson disease



### Symptom Management:

Acupuncture has been shown to help manage some of the symptoms of Parkinson's. Research indicates that regular acupuncture treatments may help reduce alleviate muscle stiffness and enhance motor coordination. By targeting specific acupuncture points, it may aid in relaxing the muscles and enhancing mobility.



### Pain Relief:

Many people with Parkinson's suffer from pain due to their Parkinson's. This can be from muscle rigidity, nerve, joint, or other pain. Acupuncture's natural pain-relieving effects may provide welcome relief, making daily activities more manageable and enjoyable.



### Stress Reduction:

Living with Parkinson's can be emotionally taxing; with symptoms also including anxiety and depression. Acupuncture is known for its calming and mood-enhancing effects by promoting the release of serotonin. Increasing serotonin can help reduce stress and anxiety and improve overall mental well-being.



### Improved Sleep Quality:

Sleep disturbances are a common symptom of Parkinson's. While acupuncture cannot help with all sleep issues, it may be able to help with those sleep issues associated with restless leg syndrome, anxiety, or difficulty falling asleep/relaxing. Acupuncture's ability to promote relaxation and reduce discomfort can lead to improved sleep patterns, contributing to better overall health.



### Enhanced Quality of Life:

The combination of pain relief, improved mobility, reduced stress, and better sleep quality contributes to an enhanced quality of life for individuals with Parkinson disease. Acupuncture can make day-to-day activities more manageable and enjoyable, providing a sense of empowerment and independence.

## The Holistic Approach of Acupuncture

Acupuncture's holistic approach is one of its most significant strengths. Rather than simply targeting individual symptoms, acupuncture aims to address the root causes of ailments. For those with Parkinson disease, this can be particularly beneficial, as it can improve overall well-being, both physically and mentally.

There is on going research into the benefits of acupuncture for people with Parkinson's. Currently most data on acupuncture's benefits comes from small studies with no comparison groups, and results are mixed, some demonstrate benefit for acupuncture while others do not. It is crucial to emphasize that acupuncture should be seen as a complementary therapy alongside traditional medical treatments; not as a substitute for medications or other therapies recommended by healthcare professionals. A well-rounded treatment plan that includes prescribed medications, exercise, lifestyle adjustments, and complementary therapies such as acupuncture can offer a more integrative approach to managing Parkinson's symptoms.

