

PSORIASIS

Psoriasis is an irritating skin disease that primarily affects the scalp and extensor surfaces of the knees and elbows, although it can develop anywhere on the body. It is characterised by red patches covered with silvery-white scales. It occurs when the reproduction of basal cells (which are set at the bottom of several layers of cells, and from which the skin grows) increases dramatically (up to 1000 times faster than the norm).

The upper layer of skin cannot shed the dead cells at the same rate and this scaly build-up occurs. The increase in basal cell production is believed to be caused by an imbalance of two natural chemical complexes called cAMP, which inhibits cell growth, and cGMP, which encourages cell growth. Proteins and toxins from bacterial and yeast metabolism in the bowel inhibit cAMP production, and this is when the imbalance occurs.

Toxins are normally broken down by the liver. Alcohol and smoking place a severe stress on the liver and reduce its natural functions, thus causing a toxin build-up in the body, which is damaging to psoriasis sufferers. It has also been proven that stress can trigger psoriasis by increasing the levels of adrenaline, which affects the blood flow to the skin.

Whilst it is not advisable to massage areas affected by psoriasis, essential oils can be used in the bath or applied in a base oil over the area to reduce the irritation.

Oils to Ease Psoriasis

Chamomile

Bergamot

Lavender

There now follows a step-by-step guide to giving a hand and arm massage. If during any of the moves, the recipient experiences any discomfort, stop that move immediately. Whilst each move should be made in a slow, rhythmic manner, adapt the massage to the needs of the recipient. The full massage should take approximately 30 minutes, but shorten the massage if you feel that is more suitable.

ARM AND HAND MASSAGE

Have the receiver lay on their back. Make sure they are comfortable. The room should be pleasantly warm. A little light background music is optional. The arms should be free from clothing but covered with a towel on each.

Steps 1, 2 and 3 are without the use of oils.

1. Hold receivers' wrist with one hand and shoulder with the other. Gently stretch arm horizontally by the side of the body.
2. Slowly lift the arm above the head and stretch gently.
3. Friction the wrist, elbow and shoulder joints (Chinese burns).

Steps 4 to 15 are with the use of oils.

1. Cover the whole area from the shoulder to the elbow with oil and massage with the palm of the hand, outside and in, using pressure on the upward stroke and lighter on the downwards. Use both hands in alternate movements. Repeat on upper arm.
2. Work from the wrist to the shoulder using the thumbs, applying a medium pressure.
3. Hold the wrist firmly and knead with the heel of the hand from wrist to elbow. Hold elbow and repeat to shoulder.
4. Still holding the wrist and using the thumbs, push firmly up the inside of the arm towards the elbow.

Repeat 4 or 5 times along separate lines. Hold the elbow and repeat along the inside upper arm.

1. Knead the whole arm in upward strokes from wrist to shoulder.
2. Lightly stroke over the whole of the arm.
3. Using the thumbs, apply a medium pressure and work between the finger joints towards the tips.
4. Work the palm of the hand in a circular motion. Using thumbs, apply pressure to the large muscles at the base of the thumb and little finger and push outwards.
5. Relax the hand by shaking it gently.
6. Twist and stretch each finger in turn and flick energy off at the fingertips.

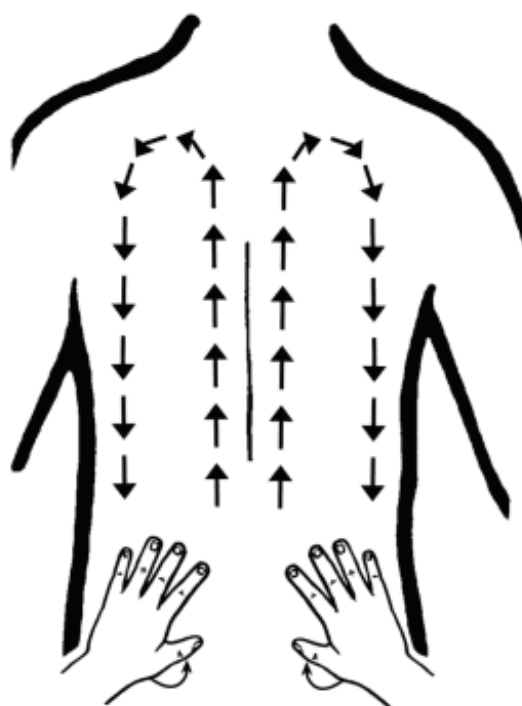
7. Sweep the whole of the arm, inside and out, in long flowing movements.
8. Sandwich the receiver's hand between your own and very slowly glide your hands off at the fingertips.

To assist in the performance of each 'stroke', here is a more detailed explanation of how each technique is performed, together with details of contra indications for massage.

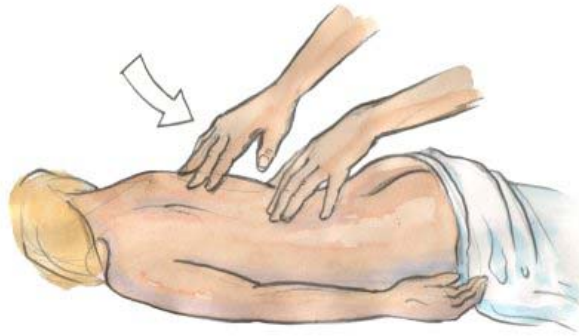
MASSAGE TECHNIQUES

Effleurage or Gliding

This is the simplest and most instinctive of all the massage strokes. It can be used on all parts of the body at the beginning and end of a massage, and to ease the flow from one movement to another. It is the finest way to spread the oil over the skin.



Feathering



As the name suggests, this is an extremely light stroke that is barely perceptible to the recipient. Nevertheless, it can have a profoundly relaxing effect, especially to those suffering from stress.

Petrissage or Kneading

This stroke is carried out on the fleshy, muscular parts of the body. It consists of alternately squeezing and releasing handfuls of flesh in a broad circular motion with the heels of the hands and the fingers, rather like kneading dough. The same kneading action can also be carried out with just the forefingers and the thumbs on smaller areas. Kneading relaxes the muscle by draining away waste products and aiding venous and lymphatic circulation.

Pulling



This is a firm stroke used on the sides of the torso and the limbs.

Friction

The deep pushing movements of the thumbs reach hidden areas, often within the second layer of muscle. Each movement creates warmth as its name suggests, due to the speed of the action. This stroke should only be used on areas that have been previously relaxed.

CONTRAINDICATIONS FOR MASSAGE

Although massage can be beneficial in reducing the stress that causes illness, there are certain times when it is not advisable to do so. Some guidelines for when this is so are found below.

When the recipient is suffering from:

- a. an infectious disease – Massage can spread the infection.
- b. a high temperature – If they are not feeling well, massage will be of very little benefit.
- c. for three months after an operation – although the outer scar tissue may appear to have healed completely, inner scarring may still be tender.
- d. thrombosis or phlebitis – being inflammatory conditions of the circulatory system, massage will do more damage than good.
- e. skin infections or lesions – avoid these areas altogether to prevent the spread of infection. These areas may also be sore (aromatherapy and massage may be used by a qualified practitioner in the treatment of certain skin disorders).
- f. heart disorders – massage has been proven to be beneficial during after care following a heart attack. However, the permission of the patient's doctor should first be sought.
- g. diabetes – again, ask the patient to gain their doctor's permission first.
- h. after a big meal – comfort and relaxation cannot be gained if massage is given too soon after a large meal. Allow digestion to complete, or preferably, eat after the massage. This applies to both recipient and practitioner.
- i. In the early stages of pregnancy – do not massage during the first 16 weeks, and never massage the feet, hands or ears throughout the pregnancy.