

HOLISTIC HEALTH

Take the issue out of the tissue



METROCREATIVE CONNECTION

Massage is good for more than relaxation, but that alone is beneficial to your health.

How massage therapy can help with your overall health

By **Malissa Martin**
For *Digital First Media*

Some people still believe massage therapy is an indulgence purely for relaxation. The health benefits of massage, however, have proven otherwise.

Today we know that our mind-body connection means excessive stress brings on or exacerbates illness by reducing our own natural immunity to disease. People who value their health know that, like a healthy diet and exercise, regular massage treatments are a valuable part of a stress-reduction plan.

Anxiety, depression and other mental health conditions can be better managed with massage therapy, according to an article on the Mayo Clinic website (mayoclinic.org). In addition, massage helps reduce or alleviate headaches, joint pain, digestive disorders, fibromyalgia and much more.

Second-generation massage therapist Christian Monk, owner of Beauty & Bodyworks Day Spa in Southfield, wants to spread the word of the health benefits of massage therapy. For the last 12 years, the Army veteran has seen the positive impact massage can have on a person's well-being.



PHOTO BY MALISSA MARTIN

Second-generation massage therapist Christian Monk is the owner of Beauty & Bodyworks Day Spa in Southfield.

She says a 12-year client brought in his daughter, who did not think she wanted massage.

"So she gets her massage and she comes out the room and she says, 'Girl, I want to buy this.' She was like a different person than what she was when she walked in," Monk says. "She was very apprehensive about massage and the benefits, because people don't know until they actu-

ally experience it. People just don't know that they're wound up that tight and that they need that touch — and that touch is so important."

Massage therapy has many forms, applied according to a therapist's training and a client's ailments. Some commonly known techniques are Swedish, hot stone, deep tissue, prenatal, shiatsu and sports massage.

Swedish massage consists of long, smooth, slow strokes toward the heart, to relax the body and mind, stimulate surface blood flow and relieve pain.

With hot stone massage, the practitioner applies smooth stones warmed to no more than 127 degrees onto key areas of the body to increase relaxation of targeted muscles.

The term deep tissue massage refers to increased pressure applied by a therapist aiming to alleviate chronic pain and increase range of motion. This type of massage can be painful. Although some call it a "good pain," any massage therapy should be done only to the client's tolerance.

Prenatal massage is gentle and specifically tailored for expecting mothers to help reduce the physical discomforts and mental stress of carrying a growing baby.

Shiatsu, which means "finger pressure," is a Japanese bodywork practice in which therapists use their thumbs, hands, elbows or feet on points along body meridians defined by traditional Chinese medicine. It includes stretching and rotating limbs.

Sports massage can help relieve soft-tissue aches and muscle stiffness to prepare for events or recover from exercise. This type of massage isn't just for sports injuries though. It can be beneficial to anyone who engages in repetitive physical activity, which is hard on the body.

Children and the elderly — who often are isolated and deprived of human touch — also can benefit from bodywork.

It's always best to check with your doctor before starting any new health regimen, including massage therapy. It's also a good idea to research a massage therapist to ensure he or she is well educated and licensed. Failing to do so could result in a bad experience, or even injury.

Massage therapy is good for almost anyone, whether they are active or sedentary. So the next time you're stressed, overwhelmed or in pain, consider getting a massage. It may help your overall health to massage that issue out of your tissue.

FIGHTING BACK

Battling the mind-stealing disease

Retired Bloomfield Hills teacher hosts benefit for husband and Alzheimer's Association

By **Lana Mini**
For *Digital First Media*

David Kontry is a name familiar to many people in Rochester. For years up until 2004, he served as a prominent dentist in the City of Rochester Hills.

Fourteen years ago, with no fanfare, Kontry quickly and quietly retired from his hard-earned practice, leaving his patients to wonder where and why he left. Always one to care for every person who visited his dental office, Kontry had to depart the field he loved so much without warning.

Changes in his mood and personality were concerned his wife, Lori. David consulted a doctor, and the diagnosis of early onset Alzheimer's disease was devastating. Kontry had no choice but to retire immediately and try to grasp his new reality.

At the time of his diagnosis, his oldest daughter was 19 and his youngest daughter only 14. Half of her lifetime, her father has struggled with this terrible disease.

"My children grew up very fast when they learned that soon their dad might not even know their names," Lori Kontry said. "We wanted to let them be young and carefree, but of course, they took on the role of caregiving."

Lori Kontry and her daughters are hosting a benefit, from noon to 10 p.m. Thursday, July 19 for the Alzheimer's Association-Greater Michigan Chapter at Clubhouse BFD, 2265 Crooks Road, Rochester Hills. There, proceeds from each Griffin Claw beer and select wine purchases will benefit the association that provides so much support to the



COURTESY LORI KONTRY

David Kontry was a well-known dentist in Rochester Hills before he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. His family is hosting a fundraising benefit to help fight the mind-stealing disease.

Kontry family. Items from generous local merchants will be raffled off, Lori Kontry says.

"When David was diagnosed, we were in shock and denial," Lori Kontry says. "We didn't know what to do or where to turn. The Alzheimer's Association-Greater Michigan Chapter provided information, resources and support."

The Kontry family, known as "David's Dream Team" over the years, has become one of the top fundraising families for the Alzheimer's Association, based in Southfield, raising \$143,567 to date through events and participating in the organization's annual Walk to End Alzheimer's.

"We know that it is difficult to find any family that hasn't been impacted by this disease," Lori Kontry says. "We hope that res-

idents in the area who were once David's patients, or those who are impacted, will come to the fundraiser."

Hosting events is not easy for Lori and her daughters, who have careers of their own. Caregiving itself is a physically and emotionally challenging role, and fundraising is a monumental task.

"We do it because we know there are many other people like us who need help," Lori Kontry says.

"The role of a caregiver is very difficult and support groups and resources are crucial — that is why I am doing this. I am doing this for David and for others like him. These great minds that are slipping away because of this disease. Hopefully a cure is right around the corner."

FITNESS

Health & fitness tips for men

By **Dr. Sam Ho**
For *Digital First Media*

Men play an important role in the well-being of many families, and as such they should be aware of common health challenges that many men face.

Such challenges include lower life expectancy (76 years for men vs. 81 years for women); lower likelihood of visits to the doctor (76 percent of men had seen a doctor in the last year vs. 92 percent of women); and higher risk of being overweight or obese (nearly 71 percent for men vs. 59 percent for women). From an economic standpoint, productivity losses related to men's personal health issues may cost U.S. employers more than \$100 billion annually, according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). With that in mind, here are some wellness tips for men to consider:

Prevention is Important: Men are three-times as likely as women to go a year without visiting the doctor, and nearly twice as likely to be without a regular go-to doctor in times of sickness. To reverse these trends, now is the time to schedule an annual wellness visit with your primary care physician, providing an opportunity to take charge of your health and detect any potential health issues or diseases early.

Reduce the Risk: The medical journal *BMJ* recently published a study showing that men take more senseless risks than women. This behavior can manifest itself in some unfortunate consequences. For example, men are more likely to be addicted to alcohol and tobacco than women; men are twice as likely as women to binge drink; and men are 80 percent more likely to misuse drugs than women. What's more, some men are prone to push themselves physically, such as at-

tempting a marathon, triathlon or an extreme sport. It's a good idea to check with your physician before you engage in any extreme sport and start a slow and steady training routine.

Get Competitive in a Healthy Way: Men who take fewer risks and channel their competitive spirit in a healthy way can enhance their well-being and quality of life. One strategy is to pair up with a workout partner, someone who can hold you accountable and encourage you to achieve your wellness goals. Also, check if your employer offers a wellness program that enables people to earn rewards for achieving certain fitness goals or offers discounts on gym memberships. To help maintain overall health, it's important for men to "compete with themselves" and set realistic — and specific — exercise and diet goals.

Remember Behavioral Health: Numerous studies show that men are less likely than women to seek help, particularly for depression and other behavioral health issues. One potential barrier is some men might be embarrassed to ask for this type of assistance. To help with that, men can consider a virtual visit with a mental health provider via a mobile device or computer, a service that may already be available as part of their health care benefits. Virtual care can shorten wait times for an appointment, fit work and personal schedules, and eliminate travel time and expense. And, research shows that outcomes of a virtual visit with a mental health provider may be similar to in-person sessions for multiple disorders.

Following these tips may benefit men — and their families — for years to come.

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