

Reflexology footnotes

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Reflexology Relieves Symptoms of MS

Reflexology significantly improved paresthesia, urinary symptoms and spasticity in people with multiple sclerosis, according to recent research.

"Reflexology treatment relieves symptoms of multiple sclerosis: a randomized controlled study" was conducted by staff at the Department of Orthopedic Rehabilitation, Complementary Medicine Clinic and the Multiple Sclerosis Center at Sheba Medical Center in Tel-Hashomer, Israel; and the Gertner Institute for Epidemiology and Health Policy Research.

Seventy-one people with multiple sclerosis were randomly assigned to receive either reflexology or control treatment for 45 minutes once a week, for 11 weeks. Fifty-three of the subjects completed the study. Thirty-six Reflexologists participated in the study, each treating one reflexology and one control subject.

The reflexology sessions consisted of manual pressure on specific points of the feet and massage of the calf area. The control sessions consisted of nonspecific massage of the calf area, a sham treatment to control for the effects of touch and relaxation.

Outcome measures were the mean intensity of paresthesias (sensory deficits), evaluated by the Visual Analogue Scale; urinary symptoms, evaluated by the American Urological Association symptom score; sum muscle strength of the iliopsoas, quadriceps, hamstrings and adductor muscles, each evaluated by the British Medical Research Council scale; and spasticity, evaluated by the Ashworth scale.

A masked assessment was performed before the study period; at the start of the study period; six weeks into the study; at the end of 11 weeks; and three months after the study period ended.

The reflexology group showed significant improvements at the end of the study period for scores of paresthesias, urinary symptoms and spasticity. Muscle strength scores for the reflexology group showed borderline improvement. The improvement in the intensity of paresthesia remained significant at the three-month follow-up.

Subjects in the control group showed no significant improvements on any of the outcome measures.

"It is of interest to note such positive effects of single intervention on a broad range of symptoms," state the study's authors. "Further clinical and laboratory studies are needed to validate these results and to understand the mechanisms by which reflexology improves symptoms secondary to [multiple sclerosis]."

- Source: Department of Orthopedic Rehabilitation, Complementary Medicine Clinic, Multiple Sclerosis Center at Sheba Medical Center in Tel-Hashomer, Israel; and Gertner Institute for Epidemiology and Health Policy Research. Authors: I. Siev-Ner; D. Gamus; L. Lerner-Geva; and A. Achiron. Originally published in *Multiple Sclerosis*, 2003, Vol. 9, pp. 356-361.



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