

# Massage for Back Pain

Rescue tight muscles with a hands-on treatment

by Jenny Poust

More than 100 million Americans suffer from lower-back pain, spending \$25 billion a year (as much as the Colombian national budget) in search of relief. A tip if your pain hasn't yielded: Add massage.

When researchers at Seattle's Center for Health Studies compared massage therapy, acupuncture, and self-care in people with persistent back pain, massage was the winner, cutting the need for painkillers by 36 percent.

Massage techniques varied--including Swedish, deep-tissue, pressure-point, and neuromuscular. But the effect was similar. "When muscle fibers get stiff and tight, that blocks the exchange of fluids and nutrients in the lower back," notes certified massage therapist Rebeccah Getz, RN, of Martha Jefferson Hospital in Charlottesville, VA. "Massage loosens and 'moisturizes' muscles."

Before you get a rubdown, talk to your doctor. Then find a certified massage therapist through the American Massage Therapy Association, toll-free (888) 843-2682.

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