

# The healing power of touch

Living Well

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Hot stone massage is a popular spa treatment to explore the healing power of touch.

- CHRISTINA SYMONS PHOTO

As human beings, appropriate physical contact – in other words, simple touch – helps us develop into strong and sensitive individuals, provides comfort, calms us, enhances trust and enables us to bond with one another. Studies have shown that basic human touch can also strengthen our immune system, keep us healthier and make us happier. Healing touch may be experienced by way of professional practitioners, in community, between partners, among families and friends or simply by touching ourselves or stroking our pets.

Even a basic hug or handshake among colleagues or strangers can release the powerful neurotransmitter oxytocin, helping us to feel more connected, understood, valued and respected. This important bonding or “love hormone” is most powerfully released during sex, childbirth and breastfeeding. But the much more subtle experiences of oxytocin release via positive human touch can simply make us feel accepted and happier, according to studies by Uvnäs-Moberg, Handlin and Petersson, published by *Frontiers in Psychology* (2010).

Massaging your own hands or feet, brushing your hair, stroking your temples or dry brushing and massaging your legs or arms can benefit any of us on a daily basis. Giving or receiving massages with your romantic partner can promote emotional healing and create stronger and healthier pair

bonding. And multiple studies have shown that even a basic positive brushing of a cheek or touch on an arm can increase feelings of security between strangers, acquaintances or partners.

As a holistic healing modality, massage and healing touch are offered in myriad ways by many highly skilled and professional practitioners on the Sunshine Coast. You can explore and experience various treatments at local spas and resorts or at alternative health offices and centres. Some treatments by registered practitioners may be covered by your extended medical insurance or Medical Services Plan. Always ask before booking an appointment to be sure.

Therapeutic massage, sports massage (sometimes called deep-tissue massage), relaxation massage, healing touch, Swedish massage, Reiki and Shiatsu are some of the more common forms of professional bodywork available for full or partial body treatments. Acupuncture, Alexander technique, craniosacral therapy, reflexology, Hellerwork, myofascial release, Rosen method and Thai massage offer specialized touch and massage techniques often targeted to specific ailments or areas of the body.

There are also many wonderful local spa therapies and body treatments that provide the benefits of touch, relaxation and exfoliation, including pedicures and manicures, herbal body wraps, hot stone massage, body herbal and salt scrubs, seaweed wraps and hydrotherapy (water-based) treatments. You may also benefit by touch through exploring yoga options and movement therapies, such as therapeutic partner yoga and pair dancing.

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