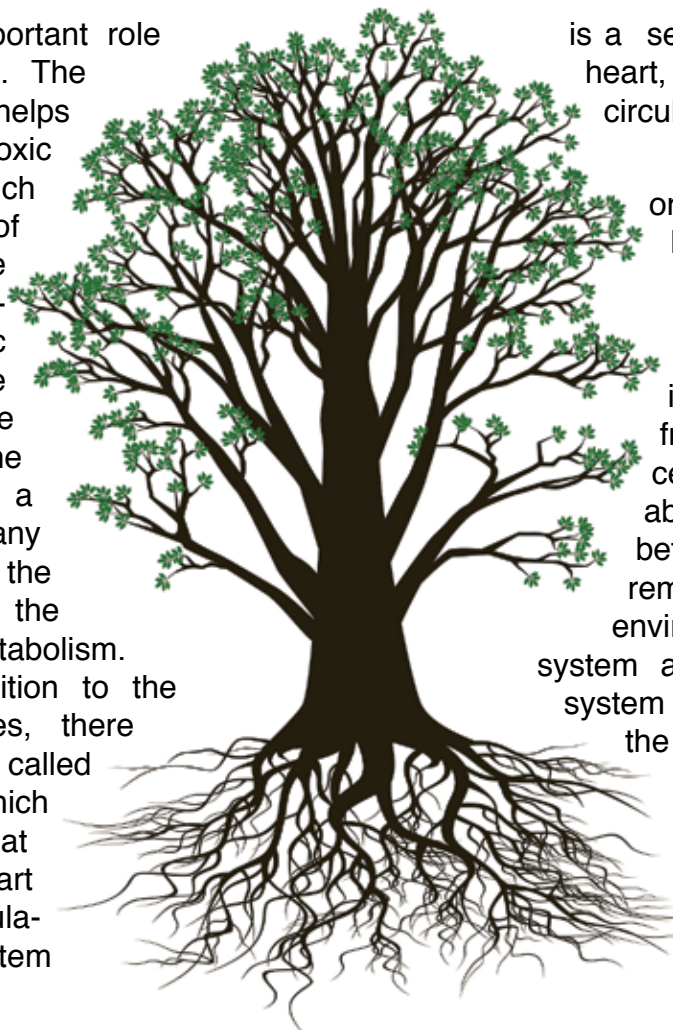




Lymph Drainage Therapy

For people living with or recovering from cancer and chronic illnesses

Lymph plays an important role in the immune system. The lymphatic system helps to clear the body of toxic waste products, which makes this a system of utmost importance for our health and well-being. The lymphatic system works with the circulatory system. The circulatory system, the heart and blood, plays a key role in bringing many needed substances to the cells and then removing the end products of cell metabolism. In the tissues, in addition to the blood-carrying capillaries, there are microscopic vessels, called lymph capillaries, which drain excess fluid that doesn't return to the heart through the venous circulation. The lymphatic system



is a second pathway back to the heart, parallel to the venous circulation.

Lymph is a fluid that originates from the intercellular fluid in the connective tissue spaces of the body. All cells release metabolic waste products into and take up nutrients from the surrounding intercellular fluid. The cells are able to take up nutrients better if the waste material is removed from the intercellular environment. The lymphatic system acts as a waste removal system of the body. It fine tunes the drainage of the connective tissue, meaning, it evacuates the water and excess substances (large proteins, foreign bodies, pathogenic substances-germs, toxins, etc.) from

it. This potentially harmful material is filtered by the lymph nodes that are located throughout the body. In fact, if the lymphatic system didn't recover the protein-rich liquid that escaped into the intercellular tissue, a large part of which the venous system cannot remove, the body could develop major edemas and auto-intoxication and die within a few days.

We separate the lymphatic circulation into two categories:

1. The superficial lymphatic circulation, just under the top layer of the skin.

About 70% of the body's lymph is drained here by the superficial lymph collectors; it is not directly stimulated by exercise. Lymph Drainage Therapy moves it. Dry brush massage helps to move it also, if done correctly.

When lymph drainage slows down or becomes obstructed, harmful waste matter begins to accumulate in the intercellular fluid. This results in an increased thickness of this vital fluid, thus preventing proper nutrient distribution to the cells, weakening and damaging them.

2. The deep lymphatic circulation of the muscles, below the fascia, and the very deep circulation of the organs. About 30% of the body's lymph is drained here. It is activated by muscle contractions, thus exercise helps to move it.

Poor circulation of blood in the body causes an overload of foreign, harmful waste matter in the intercellular tissue, and consequently, in the lymph vessels and lymph nodes. When lymph drainage slows down or becomes obstructed, harmful waste matter begins to accumulate in the intercellular fluid. This results in an increased thickness of this vital fluid, thus preventing proper nutrient distribution to the cells, weakening and damaging them.

Benefits of the specialized, gentle hands-on techniques of Lymph Drainage Therapy:

*stimulates lymphatic flow and increases

detoxification, thus promoting health and regeneration,

*stimulates the immune system,

*reduces water retention in the tissues,

*reduces muscle spasms and pain,

*promotes relaxation and diminishes the "fight and flight" response, thus helps to relax, release stress and emotional trauma.

In the beginning of the 1900's there was a fear that lymph drainage causes metastasis of cancer. However, in 1996 a report from the International Society of Lymphology stated that the result of scientific studies showed no increase in complications or metastasis of cancer with lymph drainage. Dr. Foldi, an internationally renowned lymphologist, writes "The biological properties of cancer cells and the condition of the immune system are responsible for cancer metastasis, not external mechanical forces." (Foldi, 2006, p.276).

Of course, it is important for the therapist to obtain consent of the physician for Lymph Drainage Therapy if a client is receiving treatment for cancer.

For many people who are living with cancer or chronic illness, stress, pain, fatigue, weakness, anxiety and depression can interfere with their ability to accomplish daily functions and adversely affect their quality of life. When pain is effectively managed, people have more energy and stay more active which contributes to greater confidence and the ability to maintain independent living. The gentle techniques of Lymph Drainage Therapy diminishes the "fight or flight" response, reduces pain, promotes relaxation, thus can be helpful in dealing with stress, depression and sleeping disorders.

References

Chikly, Bruno, MD: *Theory and Practice of Lymph Drainage Therapy*, 2004

Foldi, Michael, MD: *Foldi's Textbook of Lymphology*, 2006

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