

Reflexology

By Marie Tierney

Adapted from her talk at the Migraine Association Seminar Kilkenny

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In the early 20th century a medical doctor, Dr. Fitzgerald, came to the conclusion that a problem in any part of the sole related to a part of the body. So, if you work on the centre of the sole, for example, you're working on the head, neck and spinal chord itself.

In the 1930s a woman called Unice Ingles, a physiotherapist, became very interested in this new approach and developed Reflexology as it is known today.

She marked the body out on the feet so that points on the feet relate to every part of the body.

Before I say what reflexologists do, I will outline the certain things reflexologists don't do. We don't diagnose people or we don't prescribe for any specific condition. If someone with migraine comes for reflexology it's not necessarily just the head that is treated. Every part of the body is treated but of course, particular attention is paid to the area that is symptomatic for the client.

In Unice Ingles' opinion, feet are the most sensitive part and she found that pressure applied at a point in a certain area had a very therapeutic effect.

What reflexology does first and foremost is reduce stress. Stress happens when we lose faith in our ability to handle difficult situations. I'm talking about negative stress here. 75% of all diseases are stress related. When someone experiences reflexology, the body undergoes deep relaxation and as a result tension is released in the muscles. It also produces endorphins, which are the body's natural relaxants. The body produces these through the work itself and through the sense of touch.

Deep relaxation is an antidote to stress and reflexology is an excellent way of achieving this. When the body is in a state of deep relaxation it cannot achieve a negative emotion such as anxiety, fear, worry and so on.

Reflexology also improves circulation and because the body is stimulated in this way it cleans out toxins and impurities more efficiently. Our kidneys, pores and skin are involved in elimination and reflexology helps them work more efficiently. When the body's systems are working better, the body is in a more balanced state resulting in revitalised energy. As a result, the immune system works better.

Reflexology is gentle and non-invasive. Anyone can have reflexology - there are no age barriers. In fact older people can benefit greatly from it.

Reflexology is mainly done on the feet even though the hands and ears have the same reflex points.

You lie on the couch or sit in a comfortable chair and all points are worked on, not just your head and neck. The reflexologist will also work on areas related to your head and neck like the jaw line, face and shoulders.

This is important as a lot of people have tension across their shoulders. So both the emotional and physical are worked on in reflexology.

We each have an emotional centre called the *solar plexus*, which is situated around the stomach area i.e. where we feel all those butterflies, anxiety and nervousness.

Over the years I have had a lot of clients with migraine and I've noticed that many suffer constipation on an ongoing basis. I've also noticed that migraine sufferers tend to have a very high carbohydrate intake in their diet (often refined and highly processed carbs). We only need approximately 120gs of carbohydrate per day but I've seen clients with migraine who are consuming as much as 300gs per day. Dehydration has also been a big factor for migraineurs in that they may drink a lot of tea or coffee and are less inclined to replenish themselves by drinking ordinary water.

The caffeine in tea and coffee is a diuretic, which acts on the kidneys to get rid of fluid from the body. As a result the organs of elimination don't work as efficiently as they could.

Reflexology restores balance to the body's systems. We must never underestimate the body's ability to heal itself and make a point of looking at our lifestyle, how we manage stress and our diet and so on. We have the responsibility to listen to our body's alarm bells and do something about it.

Did you know that every 24 hours:

- Your heart beats 703,689 times
- Your blood travels 168 million miles
- You breath 24,040 times
- You inhale 438 cubic feet of air
- You eat 3¹/₄ pounds of food
- You drink 2.9 pounds of liquid
- You lose 7.8 pounds in waste
- You pespire 1.43 pints
- You give off 85.6 fahrenheit of heat
- You turn in your sleep 25-30 times
- You speak 48,000 words
- You move 750 major muscles
- Your nails grow .0046 of an inch
- Your hair grows .017 of an inch
- You exercise 7 million brain cells

So it pays to take care of the machine!