

The earliest evidence of Reflexology is found in Ancient Egyptian wall paintings dated around 2330 B.C. There is further evidence of the practice in China and India which accompanied the Buddhists as they moved across the world. It eventually made its way to Europe and was used in medieval times for various ailments. Europe during the Victorian era is when research was conducted into the connections between stimulation on the feet and the subsequent effect within the body. These were mapped and tested and a workable model of the entire body including bones, muscles, glands, fluids and organs was revealed (fig. 1). A renowned reflexologist of the time (Joe Selby Riley) is famous for saying "...if you have the toothache, squeeze your big toe..." which is where the reflex for the jaw and teeth are situated.

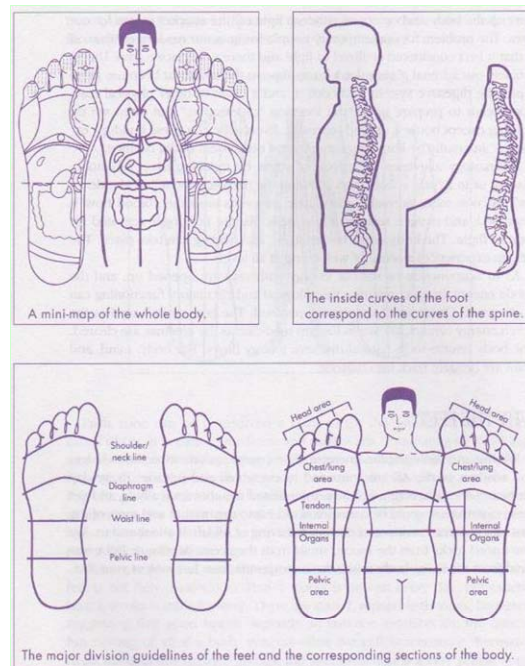


Fig. 1

Scientifically, it is said that reflexology oxygenates the body more efficiently through improved circulation- cardiovascular and lymphatic - helping every part of the body function optimally. Where there has been trauma to an area due to a break, operation or fall, the healing begins and scar tissue forms. Increased oxygen to the area aids healing but prevents calcium build-up (which can result in some loss of function and pain).

Where an organ is not functioning well, this increased oxygenation/circulation can also increase how it receives hormones, enzymes etc. and utilises them.

Stimulation and inhibition of the transmission of nerve impulses to the brain, particularly those of the autonomic nervous system (controlling functions not consciously directed e.g. sweating, intestinal movement etc.) are also important aspects of the treatment. Some obvious benefits would be the optimised peristalsis of the digestive tract and subsequent health of the whole digestive system.

Because Reflexology treats the whole person, those with almost any condition could benefit. Areas that have particularly strong history of Reflexology treatment include:

- Arthritis
- Back pain
- Subfertility
- Migraine
- Sports injuries
- Stress related conditions
- Sleep disorders
- Hormonal imbalances
- Digestive disorders

To get away from the "science" of Reflexology is to appreciate the art in its fullness. Reflexology, although having a sound basis in "fact", uses and affects other aspects such as emotion and spirit. It has the ability to improve health in an overt way but also to affect the balance of the entire person from within. There need not be a "disease" or "condition" from which one needs relief. Reflexology does not need to wait until imbalances are so great they manifest as disease. The balance of the body is subtle - detecting and re-balancing allows subtle maintenance of the healthiest of people.

When I have a reflexology treatment, I always sleep exceptionally well, wake refreshed and achieve lots on the following day. I feel enthusiastic, positive, grounded and confident which enables me to be the best I can be on the day.

Reflexology is also linked with the practices of acupuncture and acupressure which are also ancient and have increased credence in today's healthcare. The meridians used in these do not match "zones" used in Reflexology but, the meridians do pass through the feet and are therefore stimulated during a standard reflexology treatment. To understand the interconnectivity of the two practices can increase ones awareness of possible ailments, their sources, possible links between these and overall improvement. The rationale behind the two types of treatment interlock in a satisfying way which makes a comforting "whole" when treating a client.

During a treatment, chakras (circles of energy) which are part of traditional Indian belief are incidentally re-balanced which enables the person to stay calm and centred in all situations. This may explain why many report a deep sense of peace and calm during and after a treatment.

A standard treatment involves first taking a full client history of all medical details and life events which affect the person and their health. Although the main details are established here, it sometimes takes further trust and respect to build between client and practitioner for the client to fully disclose, especially when dealing with more personal and delicate issues.

The practitioner will then relax the feet and investigate the entire foot to identify any obvious areas of imbalance. Then the actual "working" of the feet can begin. This follows a routine to ensure the inclusion of all organs glands etc. As the practitioner works, further areas of imbalance may become apparent. This can take the form of nodules, popping sensations and rapid pulsing amongst others. Tenderness experienced by the client is also an indicator of some imbalance. These areas are then either held, rotated on with the thumb or stroked. Areas can also be linked to provide a pathway for energy/oxygen/nutrients to travel. For example, if someone suffered with subfertility, the thyroid and the ovaries would be linked to improve the function and interaction of both.

Spinal innervations (fig. 2) are also a valuable guide to possible links between tenderness on the spine (on the foot) and various organs etc.

Fig. 2



VERTEBRAL LEVEL	NERVE ROOT	INNERVATION	POSSIBLE SYMPTOMS
C1	C1	Intracranial Blood Vessels	Headaches • Migraine Headaches
C2	C2	• Eyes • Lacrimal Gland	• Dizziness • Sinus Problems
C3	C3	• Parotid Gland • Scalp	• Allergies • Head Colds • Fatigue
C4	C4	• Base of Skull • Neck	• Vision Problems • Runny Nose
C5	C5	Muscles • Diaphragm	• Sore Throat • Stiff Neck
C6	C6	• Neck Muscles • Shoulders	• Cough • Croup • Arm Pain
C7	C7	• Elbows • Arms • Wrists	• Hand and Finger Numbness
C8	C8	• Hands • Fingers • Esophagus • Heart • Lungs • Chest	• Tingling • Asthma • Heart Conditions • High Blood Pressure
T1	T1	Arms • Esophagus	Wrist, Hand and Finger
T2	T2	• Heart • Lungs • Chest	Numbness or Pain • Middle Back
T3	T3	• Larynx • Trachea	Pain • Congestion • Difficulty
T4	T4		Breathing • Asthma • High Blood
T5	T5	Gallbladder • Liver	Pressure • Heart Conditions
T6	T6	• Diaphragm • Stomach	• Bronchitis • Pneumonia
T7	T7	• Pancreas • Spleen	• Gallbladder Conditions
T8	T8	• Kidneys • Small Intestine	• Jaundice • Liver Conditions
T9	T9	• Appendix • Adrenals	• Stomach Problems • Ulcers
T10	T10		• Gastritis • Kidney Problems
T11	T11	Small Intestines • Colon • Uterus	
T12	T12	Uterus • Colon • Buttocks	
L1	L1		
L2	L2	Large Intestines	Constipation • Colitis • Diarrhea
L3	L3	Buttocks • Groin	Gas Pain • Irritable Bowel
L4	L4	Reproductive Organs	Bladder Problems • Menstrual
L5	L5	Colon • Thighs • Knees	Problems • Low Back Pain
S	S	Legs • Feet	Pain or Numbness in Legs
A	A	Buttocks • Reproductive	Constipation • Diarrhea • Bladder
C	C	Organs • Bladder	Problems • Menstrual Problems
R	R	• Prostate Gland • Legs	• Lower Back Pain • Pain or
A	A		Numbness in Legs
L	L	• Ankles • Feet • Toes	

As amazing as it sounds, each vertebra can be felt on the foot and worked individually. For example, bladder problems can be helped by linking with the third lumbar vertebra.

As with many complementary therapies, there is very little empirical data to support Reflexology's success. There is a growing library of research papers available but for Reflexology to enter the mainstream's healthcare arena, much more is needed.

The white paper put forward to the House of Lords in 2000 reviewed the efficacy, validity, standardisation and quality of lots of complementary therapies and Reflexology were amongst those deemed to have a place alongside traditional medical methods within the NHS and for the incorporation to be effected alongside further research.

I feel that my role as Reflexologist not only involves the treatment of clients to the best of my ability but also striving to bring more awareness and research to the public domain. Both these aspects are exciting and satisfying to me and this passes through to those I encounter on the way, giving a positive glow to all.

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