



## What is Reflexology?

Reflexology is the practice of applying pressure to the feet and hands utilizing specific thumb, finger and hand techniques without the use of oil, cream or lotion based on a system of zones and reflex areas that reflect an image of the body on the feet and hands with a premise that such work effects a physical change in the body.

The concept of reflexology began to emerge in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with European and Russian research into the nervous system and reflex. Reflex therapies were created as medical practices but soon eclipsed by the use of surgery and drugs. The ideas of reflex use for health improvement were carried on sporadically and brought to America in 1909 by Dr. William Fitzgerald, an eye-ear and nose specialist from Connecticut. Physiotherapist Eunice Ingham is credited with developing a system of reflex areas sometime in 1938.

Ancient Chinese techniques were discovered in the 1980's and have spread throughout Asia creating today's reflexology-rich environment with a thriving reflexology industry of practitioners, businesses and research.

Research has shown the specific techniques of reflexology to be effective and beneficial in many ways. A survey of 170 reflexology studies from 21 countries showed that reflexology is effective, impacting a variety of physical and psychological concerns.

There are many benefits to a reflexology session:

- **Creates relaxation:** From the moment the reflexologist's hands start their work, the relaxation begins as shown in research using EEG brain activity. All together, twenty-four studies demonstrate reflexology's relaxation effects.
- **Reduces pain:** Pain reduction following reflexology work is documented in twenty-seven studies including research showing impact on individuals of all ages and health states.
- **Enhances medical care:** Reflexology helps when nothing else can for many phantom limb pain sufferers, neuropathy patients and hemodialysis patients, to name a few.
- **Benefits mental health:** Research demonstrates that reflexology can reduce depression (eleven studies) and anxiety (nine studies).
- **Complements cancer care:** Pain, nausea, vomiting and/or anxiety eased for chemotherapy patients following reflexology work as shown by sixteen studies from seven countries.

In general terms, the benefits of reflexology have to do with the reduction of stress. Because the feet and hands set the tension level for the rest of the body, they are an easy way to interrupt the stress signal and reset homeostasis, the body's equilibrium.

Reflexology sessions last from thirty minutes to an hour. The client sits in a reclining chair placing the feet conveniently for the reflexologist to work. The reflexologist uses pressure and



stretch movement to work through the foot methodically. Technique is applied to the whole foot or hand.