



## Massage and the Importance of Sleep

People receiving a massage on a regular basis are greatly contributing to their health in many ways. Massage stimulates the body to produce serotonin. Serotonin is an extremely important neurotransmitter essential to survival. It plays a role in mood, behavior, body temperature, physical coordination, appetite and sleep. Serotonin is derived from the amino acid tryptophan and can also be converted by the brain into melatonin. Serotonin is a precursor to the body's rendering of melatonin. Melatonin is a hormone released by the brain's pineal gland to quiet and reset the part of the brain that directs circadian cycles to prepare for sleep. Circadian cycles are internal periodic rhythms that affect sleep and wakefulness.

The chemistry of sleep is relevant to massage therapists because massage can directly influence the body's production of serotonin. Because serotonin plays a role in sleep in multiple areas of the brain, it is logical to seek ways to increase serotonin levels for people that are sleep deprived. In addition, serotonin is needed for our bodies to produce melatonin. As melatonin influences the sleep stage of our circadian rhythm, a natural way of boosting serotonin is a positive sleep inducing option which makes getting a massage a real good idea. Who couldn't benefit from a good night's sleep?

Massage encourages relaxation within the body, mind and spirit. Here are just a few more reasons why getting a massage to enhance a good night sleep further benefit your health overall:

1. **Reduce Stress:** When your body is sleep deprived it goes into a state of stress. The body's functions are put into high gear which causes the blood pressure to increase more stress hormones are produced. Higher blood pressure increases your risk for heart attacks and strokes. The stress hormones make it harder to sleep.
2. **Reduces Inflammation:** With the increase in stress hormones, the level of inflammation in your body raises which also creates a greater risk for heart-related conditions, cancer and diabetes. Inflammation is considered one of the causes of the deterioration of the body it ages.
3. **Helps You Lose Weight:** People that sleep less than seven hours a night are more likely to be overweight. Lack of sleep impacts the balance of hormones in the body which affects appetite.
4. **Naps Make You Smarter:** Taking a nap during the day can protect your health and make you more productive. People who nap at work have much lower levels of stress. Napping also improves memory, cognitive function and mood.
5. **Helps the Body Make Repairs:** Sleep is the time when your body makes repairs to damage caused by stress, UV rays and other harmful exposures. Cells produce more protein when the body is sleeping. These protein molecules form the building blocks for cells which allow them to repair damage.