

Breast Massage From a Massage Therapist: Have You Considered It?

by Pam Fichtner

Your breasts deserve the attention of respectful touch which opens up their circulation and lymph flow, as well as being crucial to bringing a sense of vibrancy and movement to this heart-centred area of your body.

You may be wondering why any woman would need a breast massage from a professional Registered Massage Therapist (RMT). Considering that breasts are such a private and potentially sensitive area of the body, and so often the subject of sexual innuendoes and cultural taboos—why let someone else touch them? Why not just leave that area for doctors' annual breast exams and stop there? Or, just give yourself breast massage sporadically throughout the year?

The most obvious answer is that breasts are part of the body just like any other area and they need to be included in any full-body health regime if you want to bring wellness to your whole system. It can be so fulfilling to receive a whole body massage that includes your breasts. As a massage therapist who provides breast massage, I have heard clients say on numerous occasions that they have truly enjoyed receiving the caring attention that massage brings to their breasts, and I have seen first-hand the benefits—clients feeling more connected, relaxed, and open after having a treatment.

Along with experiencing a connection to and awareness of all the areas in your body, it can just be helpful to be more comfortable with your breasts and having them touched. Your massage therapist can assist in teaching you how to examine your breasts, do self-massage techniques, and monitor your breasts on a monthly basis. Women know that breast self-exams are important but many don't do them for a variety of reasons. Fear is a big factor in preventing proper breast care—fear of finding a cancerous lump during an examination or massage. Massage therapists



can help teach clients what they are feeling in their breast tissue; getting a professional massage monthly can help ease concerns.

Your breasts deserve the attention of respectful touch which opens up their circulation and lymph flow, as well as being crucial to bringing a sense of vibrancy and movement to this heart-centered area of your body. No woman should have a breast massage if they don't want one or feel uncomfortable with it. Of course, it is important that you give your full consent to receive massage therapy on your breasts and that your massage therapist outlines to you the indications as to why it would be beneficial for you.

Communication between you and your therapist is paramount and he or she should outline the proper draping techniques to you so that you know what to expect. The massage therapist will either uncover one breast at a time, keeping the other one covered, or have both uncovered, or they can massage over top of a towel, sheet, or T-shirt, depending upon your requests. Clients always have the right to stop the massage at any time, as with any other massage. Clear boundaries are important in this setting in order to avoid any confusion, especially due to the sensitivity of the area.

In her book *Breast Massage*, Debra Curties lists many reasons for breast massage such as pain (mastalgia, congestion, pre-menstrual symptoms) and general drainage problems (within some families there are tendencies for women to have drainage problems or large breasts). It can also help with any breast trauma such as after a car accident, or for

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women who have discomfort during pregnancy, breastfeeding, or weaning. One of my clients says: "Working with Pam has brought me in touch with my breasts. My pain is almost non-existent and now we are working on soothing the core of my breast."

I also provide support for women who have edema and lymphedema following breast surgery. Often women can get congestion and swelling in their arms and chest after a cancer-related mastectomy or lumpectomy, breast reduction, or any diagnostic surgery in the breast area. It is helpful to do some circulatory work and lymph drainage in these areas. I have just received my final certification with the Dr. Vodder School for Manual Lymph Drainage (MLD) and can offer full post-surgery treatment. It is very exciting to offer this treatment and see the immediate results of decreased swelling and pain relief with the women on whom I have worked. Clients can experience contentment, sadness, integration—it can be very emotional but extremely rewarding and beneficial.

Obviously, any massage work done on scars can be extremely helpful to healing, especially fascial work, lymph drainage on the scar, hydrotherapy, and range of motion to the area. When I see the smiles on their faces after a treatment and hear their words of relief, empowerment, and connectedness, and I sense their feelings of sadness and joy, it encourages me to continue providing this necessary service.

I would encourage every woman to get a breast massage in order to feel the benefits for herself. I know from teaching breast massage that the students often feel apprehensive before the class but once they experience the massage they say things such as, "Wow, that felt great!"; "I feel so much lighter."; "I didn't realize how heavy I felt in my breasts."; "It was so relaxing."

I am passionate about breast health and will continue to support women in maintaining healthy breasts as a preventive measure and also offering support to them if their breasts have moved to a state of disease. I encourage you to get in touch with your breasts in order to improve your own general health.

Pam is organizing a workshop for Registered Massage Therapists: Breast Massage Workshop with Debra Curties, a two-day course, CEUs, Sept. 8-9 (early registration Aug. 20), cost \$325 plus *Breast Massage* book. Location: McKay Massage and Hydrotherapy School, Saskatoon. Contact: Nancy Gallinger 1-888-649-5411 or email: info@curies-overzet.com.

Pam Fichtner, RMT, is owner of Sephira Healing and Saskatoon Massage Therapy Supply. She practises massage therapy, craniosacral therapy, manual lymph drainage, and energy balancing. She also facilitates workshops on breast and belly and complementary health. For information call (306) 230-7407 or 931-4998 or visit www.sephirahealing.ca or www.saskmassage.ca. Also see display ad on this page. *



Pam Fichtner

Photo: Dale Jack