

Forms of ABT and Shiatsu

Over the centuries, different forms of ABT were developed in China, Japan, Korea and other Asian countries. Acupressure is based on Chinese medicine, Tuina is Chinese massage, Nuad Bo'Ran or Thai massage is from Thailand, and Amma and Shiatsu are from Japan.

Styles of Shiatsu include Zen, integrative eclectic, Namikoshi, barefoot, and five element. Both the American Organization for Bodywork Therapies of Asia and the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine set standards for ABT practitioners. The references listed below are good sources of information about Shiatsu and Asian Bodywork Therapy.

References

In the Library or Bookstore:

- Beresford-Cooke, C. *Shiatsu Theory and Practice*
(Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1999)
- Jarmey, C. and Mojay, G. *Shiatsu: The Complete Guide*
(Hammersmith, London: Thorsons, 1991)
- Lundberg, P. *The Book of Shiatsu*
(New York: Simon and Schuster)

Online:

- American Organization for Bodywork Therapies of Asia
[www.aobta.org]
- National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine [www.nccoam.org]

This brochure is intended for information only. Contact your physician for diagnosis of medical conditions, and for advice on whether massage might be beneficial for you.

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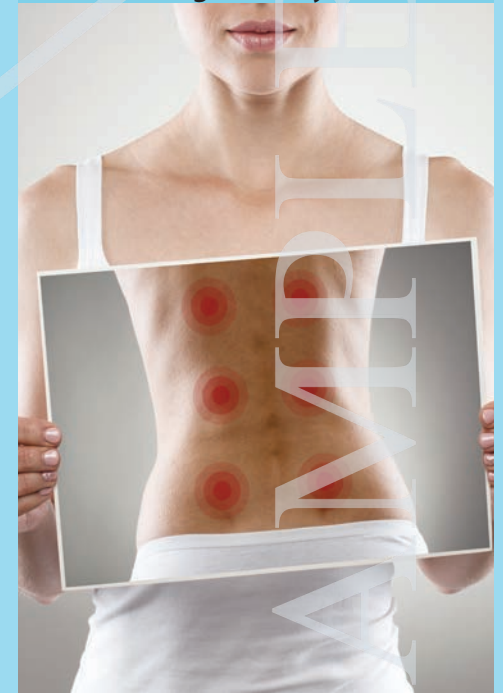
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Shiatsu & Asian Bodywork Therapy

Massage & Bodywork



**THERAPEUTIC
MASSAGE**

For a Healthier Life

Shiatsu & Asian Bodywork Therapy

Shiatsu is a popular form of Asian Bodywork Therapy (ABT) developed in Japan in the 20th century. It has ancient roots in traditional Japanese massage and in Chinese medicine. Shiatsu literally means finger pressure (shi-atsu). The manual techniques of Shiatsu are applied to the body to balance the flow of vital energy, improve health, and support healing.

Shiatsu and other forms of ABT can release stress and tension, increase vitality, strengthen immunity, relieve pain and discomfort, increase self-awareness, promote emotional balance, and address common ailments. Central to understanding Shiatsu are the concepts of Ki, energy pathways, and acupoints.

Ki and Energy Pathways

Ki (pronounced key) is “the vital energy or life force that permeates the universe, flowing through and animating all things.” According to traditional Chinese medicine, Ki flows through the body in energy pathways called channels or meridians. There are 12 primary meridians, 8 extraordinary meridians, 12 divergent channels, and several connecting channels. These energy pathways run along the surface and deep into the body. Shiatsu and other forms of ABT harmonize the ease and flow of Ki along these pathways.

Ki functions in the human body to transform, transport, hold together, protect, and warm. The aim of Shiatsu techniques is to strengthen Ki that is weak, disperse Ki that is too concentrated, move Ki that is stagnant, uplift Ki that is sinking, quiet Ki that is rebellious. According to Chinese medicine, balanced energy flow is the basis for health, and restoring lost balance is the key to healing.



Acupoints

Acupoints are spots on the energy pathways where the flow of Ki is easily affected. These are the same points used in acupuncture. In Shiatsu, finger pressure techniques stimulate acupoints without the use of needles. Pressure on acupoints helps normalize the flow of Ki.

Acupoints are identified by the energy pathway on which they are found, and are numbered in sequence for easy location. Acupoints also have Chinese names. For example, GB20 is the 20th point on the Gall Bladder Meridian located along the base of the skull, and called Fengchi or Wind Pond.

Certain acupoints have been found useful for their specific therapeutic effects. GB20 mentioned previously, clears the brain and may be used in treatment of headaches, dizziness, shoulder stiffness, and insomnia. LI20, also called Yingxiang or Welcome Fragrance, is located at the lateral base of the nose, and may be used to clear nasal congestion, sneezing, and facial paralysis.

Assessing Ki

Shiatsu and other ABT practitioners do not assess a person's health or diagnose ailments in

the same way as conventional Western medicine. They focus instead on locating points of excess or deficiency in the flow of Ki. This assessment is made using the four pillars of assessment in Chinese medicine: looking, touching, listening, and asking. ABT practitioners ask about things like appetite, sleep patterns, energy levels, relationships, and stress levels. They may also use special techniques like pulse diagnosis and hara or abdominal diagnosis to assess the flow of Ki in specific energy pathways.

The Shiatsu Session

Shiatsu may be given on a massage table, or on mats on the floor. Shiatsu techniques are applied through clothing or a sheet, and unlike Western massage, lubricants like oil are not used. Acupoints are stimulated by manual techniques such as finger and thumb pressure, palm or fist pressure, rubbing, vibration, percussion, and stretching. Techniques are applied along the energy pathways in a smooth and rhythmic sequence.

Manual techniques may be complemented by external application of medicinal plants, hot or cold applications, and dietary and exercise suggestions. Special Chinese treatments such as cupping and moxibustion may be used by qualified practitioners. Qi gong and tai chi are forms of gentle exercise that help stimulate and balance Ki.

Contraindications

Even though Shiatsu is focused on energy, techniques are applied to the physical body and have physiological effects in Western terms. Therefore, tell your practitioner if you have a medical condition or are taking medication so they can plan a healthy and safe session. It is important to let your practitioner know if you are pregnant or may be pregnant.