Benefits of Massage

Massage has been used for health benefits for many years. What is its effect on diabetes? Some research has found that massage can lower blood glucose levels as much as 20-40 milligrams per deciliter. This may be due to the reduction in stress hormones that can raise blood glucose. It can also help improve circulation and relieve muscle and joint pain and stiffness. Unfortunately studies have not shown long-term reductions in A1C values after regular massage sessions.

There are many kinds of massage and some are more vigorous than others. Before you make an appointment, discuss with your health care provider about whether you should have a massage and which one is best for you. Some health insurance will pay for “therapeutic” massage if your health care provider writes a prescription for it.

You may have to do some research to find the right massage therapist. Ask people whom you trust about whom they have used. Always go to a therapist that is licensed by the state. Ask whether he/she has worked before with someone with diabetes. You also want a massage room that is a good temperature with clean linen on the massage table.

Get a gentle massage if you have delicate skin or if you have nerve damage (neuropathy) in your hands, legs or feet. The massage lotions and oils can help if you have dry skin. However the therapist should not massage oil or lotion between your toes. This could increase risk for a skin infection. Also skip hot stone massage if you have neuropathy since you may not be able to tell if the stones are too hot.

Massaging an area where you recently injected diabetes medicine will increase its absorption. Ask your massage therapist to NOT rub this area.

Since massage can lower blood glucose, check your blood glucose before you begin if you use a diabetes medicine that can cause a low blood glucose reaction (hypoglycemia). Then check again at the end. You may need to eat 15–30 grams of carbohydrate before the massage if your blood glucose is likely to drop below 70 milligrams per
deciliter. A fast and easy treatment is some glucose gel or jelly beans. Also tell the therapist what your symptoms are if you do go low and where your carbohydrate is so he/she can help you if needed. You do not want to drive after the massage if you blood glucose is too low.

Regular massage can make you feel better and reduce your need for pain medicine. You may sleep more deeply and find physical activity easier to do. But like all treatments, you need to talk with your medical team about whether it is right for you before you invest.

**Back to Basics: Change Your Environment to Change Your Weight**

Dr. Brian Wansink, a researcher at Cornell University, studies what makes people eat more or less. He has written a best-selling book about his research called *Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think.*

A recent article in *Time* magazine featured some of the results from his research:

1) Most people know when they eat way too much or too little, but we have a “mindless margin” where we can eat about 100 calories more than we need without noticing. These extra 100 calories can add up 10 extra pounds of weight we do not need. So know how much food you are eating before you start.

2) If you have fruit visible in your home or office, you are likely to weigh 8 pounds less than someone who does not. However if you have cookies, candy, chips or regular soft drinks sitting out, you may weigh 8-25 pounds more. Even if you have a box of dry breakfast cereal on the counter or table, you will likely weigh 19 pounds more than someone who does not.

3) Using smaller dishes and having the serving dishes out of sight or across the room makes it less likely you will overeat. A study of men found that if the serving dishes were off the table, they ate 29% less.

4) People with weight problems often dig into a buffet without thinking. They also sit facing the food 16 feet closer than someone of normal weight. In contrast, normal weight people survey the buffet before carefully choosing their favorite foods and sit facing away from the food at a more distant table.

5) If we are too hungry, we are more likely to choose convenience foods high in fat and carbohydrate. Typical snacks are candy, crackers, chips and cereal. If we are also distracted by friends, TV, driving or other activities, we are much more likely to eat more than we need. For example, watching TV while eating popcorn increases a person’s intake by 28%. The longer people watch, the more they eat.

6) Being impulsive really matters. People who score highest on tests measuring impulsivity weigh and an average of 22 pounds more than those who are less impulsive.
7) People with weight problems also chew each mouthful less than thinner people (12 versus 15 chews). Slowing down so it takes 20 minutes to consume a meal can increase a feeling of fullness. Overweight women who paused between bites took 20 minutes to consume a meal with an average of 579 calories per meal instead of 646 calories.

8) Also food variety causes us to eat more. That’s why we overeat at buffets. Dr. Wansink recommends that we only put two different foods on our plate at a time so we will get bored with their flavors before we overeat.

9) Also be mindful of your eating companions. You will eat 35% more when eating with one friend and 96% more with a group of friends than you would eat while alone. If your friend is overweight you will also eat more. That doesn’t mean you should eat by yourself or reject heavier friends, but you will need to be more aware of your food intake.
Low Carb Eggplant Lasagna

Even if you are not wild about eggplant, you will find this recipe delicious.

**Sauce:**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ cup chopped onion
- ½ cup diced bell pepper
- 2 garlic cloves minced
- ½ cup sliced portabella mushrooms
- 16-ounce can low sodium tomatoes
- 6-ounces tomato paste
- ½ tablespoon chopped fresh basil
- ½ tablespoon chopped fresh oregano
- ½ tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 ½ teaspoons chopped fresh cilantro

**Lasagna:**
- 1 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 medium sliced eggplant
- Non-stick cooking spray
- 1 ½ cups part skim ricotta cheese
- ⅓ cup parmesan cheese
- ¼ cup part-skim mozzarella cheese

1. Heat a non-stick skillet on medium-high heat. When hot, add the 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Sauté the onion and bell pepper until tender - about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and continue cooking until garlic is limp, but not brown.
2. In a medium, microwave-safe casserole dish with a lid, combine the sautéed vegetables with the tomatoes and tomato paste. Fill the tomato paste can with 6 ounces of water and add to the casserole. Add the basil, oregano and cilantro. Stir well.
3. Cover and microwave the sauce for 5 minutes on high. Stir and microwave on medium for another 5 minutes.
4. While sauce is cooking, wipe out the skillet and reheat on medium-high heat. Add the remaining oil. Sauté the eggplant in two batches until brown.
5. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.
6. When sauce is done, spray a 9x13 glass baking dish with non-stick spray. Spread in 1/3 of the sauce over the bottom. Add a layer of eggplant. Spread each slice of eggplant with a thin layer of ricotta cheese. Sprinkle with half the parmesan cheese. Spread on another 1/3 of the sauce.
7. Repeat another layer of eggplant, ricotta and parmesan. Spread on remainder of sauce. Top with mozzarella.
8. Bake for 30 minutes. Let stand 10 minutes to firm up before serving.

**Nutrition analysis:**
- Calories: 204
- Carbohydrate: 19 grams
- Protein: 12 grams
- Fat: 10 grams
- Saturated fat: 4 grams
- Cholesterol: 24 milligrams
- Sodium: 390 milligrams
- Fiber: 6 grams

**Exchanges:** 1 carbohydrate, 2 medium fat meats

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Dear Friend,

*Diabetes Life Lines* is a bi-monthly publication sent to you by your local county Extension agent.

It is written by an Extension Nutrition and Health Specialist and other health professionals from the University of Georgia. This newsletter brings you the latest information on diabetes self-management, healthy recipes and news about important diabetes-related events.

If you would like more information, please contact your local county Extension Office.

Yours truly,

County Extension Agent