

Put Your FEET UP

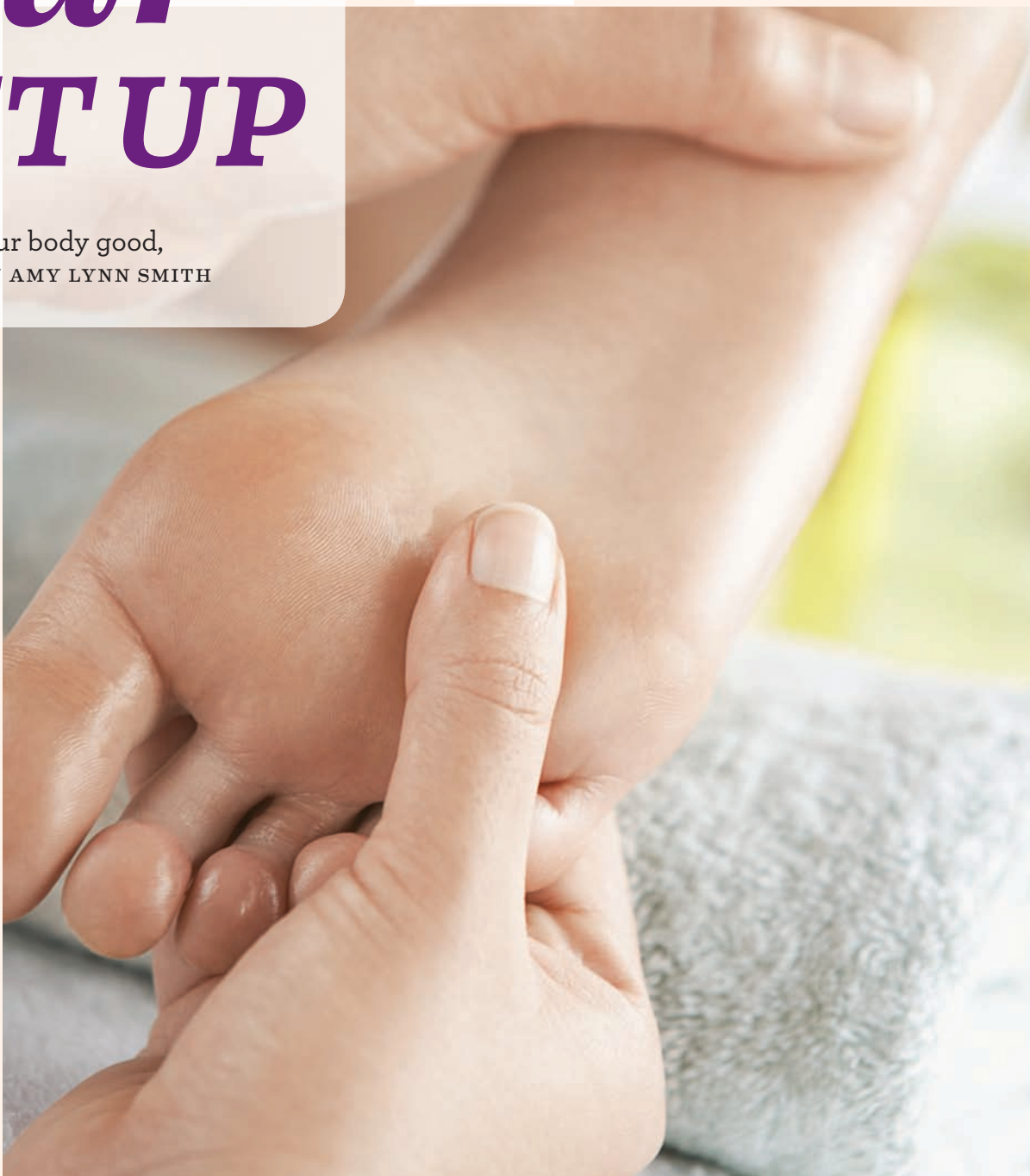
Reflexology can do your body good,
from head to toe BY AMY LYNN SMITH

IF SOMEONE OFFERED YOU a foot massage, odds are you'd jump at the chance. Why? Because it feels really, really good.

But foot reflexology massage is more than a feel-good treat. It's actually good for your entire body.

Feet First

You don't have to run around in circles looking for a fabulous foot reflexology massage. Just visit MassageEnvy.com to find a location near you.



BENEFITS ABOUND

Reflexology is an ancient technique based on the principle that there are reflex points on the feet that correspond to various areas of the body. Over the years, research has shown that stimulating these reflex points can deliver many benefits.

The moderate pressure used in reflexology is key to generating certain responses in any massage, says Tiffany Field, PhD, director of the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami School of Medicine.

“When you apply moderate pressure instead of light pressure, the heart rate goes down, blood pressure goes down and the brain-waves change in the direction of relaxation.”

There’s also a reduction in stress hormones, which supports the survival of immune cells.

“These immune cells, particularly natural killer cells that are the front line of the immune system, will kill bacterial, viral and cancer cells,” she explains.

In addition, reflexology can help relieve common forms of arthritis and foot pain, including plantar fasciitis. One clinical study showed that it may help reduce lower back pain, while other research has indicated that it may have a role in relieving depression, improving sleep and making cancer patients more comfortable.

PRENATAL POWER

If that’s not enough, consider this: A study performed by the Touch Research Institute compared fetal response to both foot and hand massages given to the mother.

Although hand massages elicited no response, the fetuses reacted to the foot massages. In fact, they responded earlier in their development than fetuses did to direct abdominal stimulation—around 22 weeks compared with 32 weeks.

“Clearly, there are some receptors on the feet that are extremely responsive and carry those messages very far,” Field says.

CHARTING THE (RELAXATION) COURSE

Many reflexologists use a chart that indicates what area of the foot directly corresponds to a particular part of the body. Although Field says there’s no scientific evidence of these direct connections, it’s clear from other research that the effects of massage travel throughout the body.

“Stimuli get transmitted all the way up to the brain and back down to a particular body part during massage,” she says. “The biochemical electrical fields that enable that reaction are very impressive, but equally hard to measure.”

There’s no question that reflexology massage can put a spring in your step. And with the arrival of spring, you might consider adding a relaxing, therapeutic sugar foot scrub available at Massage Envy Spa locations. It’s the perfect way to get your feet—and the rest of your body—ready for the season ahead. ❀



Talk the Talk

When getting a reflexology massage, tell your therapist if you’re seeking relief for a specific issue like arthritis, an ankle injury or stress. Want all-around relaxation? You’ll get that, too.



Walk the Walk

Massage Envy doesn’t just provide therapeutic massage treatments that can help relieve and control certain symptoms of arthritis. We’re proud to be a major sponsor of the Arthritis Foundation’s annual nationwide Arthritis Walk. We also host

Healing Hands for Arthritis, a one-day, in-clinic nationwide event that has raised nearly \$700,000 so far.

The Arthritis Walk events across the country raise awareness and funds to fight arthritis through research, public health initiatives and public policy efforts. America’s leading cause of disability, arthritis affects 50 million men, women and children—but you can help make a difference in their lives.

Sign up to be an individual walker, form a team of friends and family or even get your company involved. Visit ArthritisWalk.org to find an event near you and get all the details you need to jump right in.

