

Shiatsu is a traditional oriental therapy that had its origin in China, traveled to Japan and then finally to the West. It defines health as equilibrium, balance and harmony, never considering the body separate from the mind or the person from his or her environment. According to Shiatsu, harmony of the self with self, self with the people around and self with the environment is health. A person who is balanced and stable is healthy.

Shiatsu like Zen is all about maintaining equanimity, harmony and balance. Zen Shiatsu is based on two main principles: The inevitability of change and oneness with nature. Zen philosophy can't say it enough number of times - every thing in this universe is impermanent (anicca); everything changes - change is inevitable. So Shiatsu recognizes that permanent good health or balance is an impossible dream; the idea is to make the self-correcting mechanism so alert that the slightest of imbalances is corrected as soon as possible.

The word 'Shiatsu' is of Japanese origin and is made up of two words 'Shi' meaning finger and 'atsu' meaning 'pressure'. The basic concept of this massage is to encourage a positive outlook to life. According to Shiatsu, the working of our body is guided by a 'vital force' which is energy or 'Qi'. Thus in this massage, the fingers are used to apply pressure on various parts of the body to cure many diseases and ailments. Sometimes even the thumb, palm, elbow, knees and feet are used. Walking barefoot on the patient's body too is not an unknown thing!

This technique is very similar to acupuncture but unlike acupuncture where needles are used, Shiatsu believes in applying pressure on various body parts. Pressure is applied on the acupuncture points as well as on general areas. Shiatsu is a much wider concept that includes stretching, joint rotation and manipulation and also very light holding techniques for spiritual healing. It thus helps create flexibility and restores balance in the body.

Diseases:

Shiatsu not only helps us get over specific ailments but also maintains overall health. It is known to be very effective in rectifying problems such as:

Insomnia

Back pain

Headache

Constipation

Skin irritation

Circulatory problems

Multiple sclerosis

Arthritis

Menstrual problems

Respiratory problems

Reproductive problems

Emotional problems

Nervous system ailments

Anxiety

Stress

Posture problems

Behaviour imbalances

Treatment:

‘Touch’ is an integral part of Shiatsu. It is the way in which the practitioner can communicate his love and compassion, in other words positive energy, to the patient so that the body balance can be restored. The treatment takes nearly an hour or more each time and 3 or 4 sessions are spaced out in a time period of 4 to 6 weeks. However it is also guided by the nature of the problem.

The two basic techniques are: Stimulating, and Sedating. Pressure is applied for may be 2-3 minutes to a particular area. Sometimes the practitioner will apply pressure in different forms like rotating some part of the body, stretching some limb or simply holding. The end of the session will result in a relaxed and at times a sleepy person. So go ahead and take some rest.

Important: After Effects: Shiatsu is generally a very safe treatment that can even be practiced on children, pregnant women and the elderly. However, sometimes you may experience some after-effects like: Cough and cold Tiredness Emotional ups and downs Headache or some aches and pains This is a sign that the treatment has had an effect. In fact, what it means is that the body is getting rid of unwanted foods, stress and tensions. Precautions: It should not be practiced or taken if there is high fever It should not be practiced or taken if there is some infection It should not be practiced or taken if there is a cut, bruise or inflammation of any sort. Never take or give Shiatsu after a large meal. Always wear comfortable and loose fitting clothes. No pressure at any time should be applied to the varicose veins. The room in which it is practiced should always be quiet, warm and clean. Try this oriental therapy and stay relaxed and stress free. Allow the body to rebalance and experience the difference, instead of flogging yourself on along the same road.