

## REFLEXOLOGY Part 1 – All About It

Reflexology is the science that there are reflex areas on the hands and feet relative to all the organs, glands and other parts of the body. It is a particular way of using the hands, thumbs and fingers to work on these reflex areas.

I am trained and certified by the International Institute of Reflexology in the Original Ingham Compression Method. While working, I place my thumbs or fingers over a reflex area and compress it to stimulate nerve and blood supply to that area of the body to encourage it to cleanse and heal.

I am not a doctor so I do not diagnose illness or conditions. I also do not prescribe medicine or treatment methods, nor do I treat only a specific illness or condition. Reflexology is an excellent tool to help the body get, and stay, healthy but should not be considered a replacement for regular medical care. I do not consider Reflexology “alternative care” because that implies “in place of”. I refer to it as “complementary care” because it helps all other health care methods work better and faster.

I stimulate all the reflex areas on the feet, during every session, even though I may give more attention to areas where clients indicate they have a problem. This stimulates better nerve and blood supply throughout the whole body, promotes relaxation and helps the body reach a state of homeostasis. When all the organs and glands are balanced and working properly together, better health will occur.

Reflexology is not massage. Massage therapists are trained to know all the muscles, tendons and ligaments of the body and understand how they work and how to help them relax and heal from injuries. They use oils and creams to lubricate the skin so that they can glide smoothly over the skin surface while working the tissues below.

Reflexologists are trained to know the body's internal systems, understand how they work together and how to work the reflex areas to best stimulate all the organs and glands of a system to balance and work better together. Because I need to compress an area, I do not use any lubrication that would cause my fingers to slide off the exact spot I need to stimulate.

I do not rub. I use a specific method, called “walking”, to move my thumbs and fingers across the surface of the feet and hands. Walking allows me to stimulate every area and feel the tissues underneath so I can stop and “tip” the edge of my thumb or finger down into any spot that needs more attention. I use movements that flex the feet and hands to loosen up the tissues and allow increased circulation. Using reflexology techniques and compression, I work around the ankles and lower legs and the wrists and forearms to relax the body further.

When I put all of these techniques together into a session it feels very smooth and relaxing. Most of a Reflexology session should feel wonderful. Only while working on a reflex area relative to where a client has a problem, should there be any slight discomfort. I start a new client with very gentle pressure, and increase gradually until I reach the deepest point of comfort for that individual. As I explain; I need to work the areas firmly enough for the client to feel it but not hard enough to cause excoriating pain. I ask my clients to let me know how everything feels so I can use whatever pressure my clients tell me “hurts good”.

Most of my new clients are referred to me by other clients but a few local medical doctors and Chiropractors refer some of their patients to me for additional help. By definition, Reflexology aids the body systems to cleanse and heal; so many clients come because of body issues like headaches, digestive problems, sinus congestion or edema, etc. Those people usually discover that their feet and hands feel better also. The methods I use stimulate a lot of circulation in the extremities themselves so some clients come to me to make their feet or hands feel better, and then discover their headaches go away or their stomach feels better. Reflexology can't make just one thing feel better; it always helps the whole body.

When new clients come to me with a specific problem, I usually suggest returning once a week for 3 or 4 weeks. That gives us a good measure of how Reflexology is going to work. I always ask how clients felt since the last appointment, what different pain levels or sensations were experienced and how they responded to various activities and situations. From the beginning, I encourage clients to tell me how they feel and what they need or want from each session. I explain that they live in their body so they are the "expert", not me. After improvement has started, clients are encouraged to decide for themselves how frequently they need to return.

Some of my clients consider Reflexology an important part of their stress management and see me weekly or every other week. Others put themselves on a maintenance schedule of every three or four weeks, knowing that if something unusual occurs, they can call and see me sooner. Sometimes clients who have gotten relief disappear for months and years at a time before they need my help and call me again. That's perfectly fine.

Occasionally, Reflexology doesn't help a client. In those cases, I suggest other possibilities and help the person connect with someone who may help more.

When clients come to my office, they remove only shoes and socks before relaxing into a soft, cushy reclining chair. I raise their feet and lean them back. I offer a neck roll or pillow, if needed for comfort. I have several weights of blankets available for chilly days. Soft instrumental music with nature sounds, indirect lighting and soothing essential oil fragrances add to the safe and relaxing environment.

In the next Chapter of Pats Book, be sure to look for REFLEXOLOGY Part 2 – Success Stories.

If you want to try Reflexology, and are too far away to call me, you can contact the International Institute of Reflexology and ask for a list of certified Reflexologists in your area.

International Institute of Reflexology, Inc.  
5650 First Avenue North  
PO Box 12642  
St Petersburg FL 33733-2642 (USA)  
(727) 343-4811 phone  
(727) 381-2807 fax  
[iir@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:iir@tampabay.rr.com)

Patricia Kenworthy August, 2006