

Lymphatic Massage Boosts Immunity During the Cold and Flu Season

By Karen Axelrod, NCTMB, CST

Have you been hit by this season's flu bug? Do you have a cold you just can't shake off? Are you still battling that lingering cough that just won't go away?

If you've experienced any of these conditions recently, it might be because your immune system is weak. If your immune system is not functioning at its highest potential, this leaves you vulnerable to viruses and bugs that cause these common cold-weather illnesses.

The lymphatic system is a key part of the immune system. It consists of lymph nodes located throughout the body that act as processing centers to eliminate invading organisms. Lymphatic fluid carries cells that circulate freely throughout the body in their ongoing mission to search and destroy germs, viruses, toxins, and bacteria. When a cell locates an offending organism, it travels to the lymph nodes and drops off its find for final elimination.

If someone's lymphatic system is blocked, it severely limits the body's ability to fight off even a common cold. This leads to remnants of a bug remaining in the body over time and further contributing to a state of ill health. A sluggish lymphatic system with inhibited flow of fluid or an inability to fully eliminate a bug can lead to toxic build-up and perhaps a more serious illness.

What causes the lymphatic system to break down? Surgery or an injury resulting in scar tissue can impede the flow of lymph fluid. In some cases, such as mastectomy, lymph nodes are removed, thus completely eliminating some of those very important waste-processing centers. Emotional or mental distress also affects the immune system. Other causes include lack of sleep, poor eating habits, a sedentary lifestyle, overuse of antibiotics, or overindulgence in drugs or alcohol. In some cases the lymphatic system can adapt to these disturbances, but not always.

For more information on lymphatic massage or to schedule a session, contact Karen Axelrod, NCTMB, CST, at 310-376-0113. Karen is an advanced-level lymphatic therapist and craniosacral therapist with a private practice in Redondo Beach.



An impaired lymphatic system doesn't always lead to increased illness, however, but it can lead to physical discomfort. Many people who have had lymph nodes removed near the arms or legs

experience no further breakdown in their immunity, but they may experience swelling in the affected limb. Pregnant women with swollen hands and feet experience a build-up of fluid as a result of increased pressure around lymph vessels due to weight gain. Someone whose body houses toxic build-up may experience frequent headaches, fatigue, or unexplained body aches and pains.

Lymphatic massage boosts the immune system by increasing the circulation of lymph fluid in the body. A lymphatic practitioner uses gentle pressure to activate sluggish nodes and then flush fluid through stagnant areas. This type of treatment helps build resistance to colds and flu as well as alleviate physical discomfort associated with lymph-related swelling or toxic build-up. Lymphatic massage can be performed on a certain affected area or encompass the whole body to aid overall health and well-being.

To help eliminate a recent cold, flu, or minor illness, two to five weekly sessions are recommended to ensure that the system reaches its peak. Individuals with a more serious illness or ongoing issues may benefit from monthly or bimonthly treatments to help manage the problem long-term.

Lymphatic massage can benefit children as well as adults, including the elderly. Because of its gentle, relaxing nature, a lymphatic massage is ideal for those in acute pain or who anyone who prefers a light-touch treatment.

