

## Lesson 1: Introduction to Indian Head Massage

### OBJECTIVES OF THIS LESSON

- Describe the history, philosophy and role of Indian head massage and its relationship to other massage traditions.
- Describe the objectives and possible benefits of Indian head massage treatment.

### What is Indian Head Massage?

Indian head massage uses and adapts classic Swedish massage techniques for treating the scalp, face, neck, shoulders, and upper arms. It is extremely effective for treating stress because it works in the areas of the body most affected - the shoulders and upper back, neck, and head. However, although the treatment focuses on the upper torso and head, the effects are felt throughout the mind and body.



It is performed on the client whilst clothed, which makes it very effective for short treatments treating clients were uncomfortable about understanding. Oils which have traditionally been used to maintain strong, healthy, shiny hair can be used during the scalp massage but clothing prevents their use during other parts of the treatment.

### History of Indian Head Massage

As the name suggests, Indian Head Massage (IHM) has its origins in India and dates back over 5000 years. Originally used as a grooming technique in India, it has developed in the West to be a popular complementary therapy used by many for many different reasons. It can be performed anywhere as it can be applied through the clothes.

Head massage is commonplace in India – the techniques having been passed through the generations for thousands of years. It has featured in the earliest Ayurvedic texts, which date back nearly 4000 years. Aromatic oils, herbs and spices, massage and pressure points have an important function to invigorate and improve the constitution. Indian Head massage is based on the traditional form of Champi, an Indian word denoting a particular massage technique. The English word “shampoo” is derived from the Hindi.

Indian women, who have always been renowned for their long, beautiful hair, developed the art of Head Massage. Sesame, almond, olive, mustard and coconut oils were used, as

well as buttermilk and henna and were not simply part of a beauty treatment but were also designed to stimulate and refresh.

Indian families use massage on daily basis for both relaxation and healing and to maintain stress relief from the benefits of touch. Before the advent of hairdressing saloons in India, barbers would visit family homes and in addition to cutting hair, would offer head massage. The more affluent families would employ such a person to attend to them regularly. Their techniques were simple but effective and often induced a state of relaxation.

In India today, it is quite common to be offered a head massage on street corners, in the marketplace and on the beach. Today, Indian infants often receive a daily massage from birth until they are 3 years old to keep them in good health. The frequency lessens as they get older and, as soon as they are able, they are taught to share a massage with family members. Massage occurs across the generations as an integral part of family life.

The treatment was brought from India to Britain in 1973 by an osteopath and massage therapist, Narendra Mehta, who was studying physiotherapy. He discovered that massages in Britain did not involve the head and consequently returned to India in 1978 to research the physiological benefits of IHM. Studying IHM and recording the skills used, Mehta developed the treatment to suit Western tastes. He named this treatment “Indian Champissage” from the Indian word “Champi” meaning “head massage”. Both Indian Head Massage and Champissage are terms used today.

In the West, IHM has evolved as part of a stress management programme and incorporates pleasant smelling oils massaged into the neck and shoulders, as well as the back, arms, scalp and face.

## The Ayurveda Influence

Ayurveda is the oldest system of medicine on the earth. Its principles are said to have been passed down to humankind from a chain of gods leading back to Brahma, father of all gods. It has been called the ‘mother of medicine’ and is generally accepted to be the forerunner of all the great healing systems of the world.

Written text show that the ayurvedic medicine practiced from about 1500 BC to AD 500 was incredibly advanced, with detailed knowledge of paediatrics, psychiatry, surgery, geriatrics, toxicology, general medicine and other specialties. However, invasions disrupted its teaching and, when the British introduced Western medicine to India, ayurveda became unfashionable and almost disappeared entirely. It was saved, however, by the intervention of Mahatma Gandhi who opened the first new ayurvedic college in 1921. The fundamental aim of ayurveda is to attain perfect health and well-being. The ancient texts say that the human lifespan should be around 100 years – and that all those years should be lived in total health, both physical and mental. The ayurvedic practitioner is therefore looking to balance the body and mind, to ferret out health problems before they happen or to nip them in the bud before they do any real harm. Unfortunately, illnesses (and the shortening of life) are caused by many factors: constant stress; irregular meals; eating the wrong kind of

food; taking the wrong medication; living an unhealthy lifestyle; having bad body posture; breathing in polluted air; allowing microorganisms to enter the body; becoming injured; not digesting food properly and even indulging in too much sexual activity.

### Benefits of Indian Head Massage

Apart from the pampering aspect of the treatment, massage has many physiological and emotional benefits. Indian Head Massage is known to:

- improve blood flow to the head and neck
- improve lymphatic drainage
- relieve muscular tensions
- relieve physical and emotional stress
- improve joint mobility
- promote deep relaxation
- help improve muscle tone
- help relieve eye strain
- help relieve deep congestion in the head
- relieve stress and anxiety
- increase release of endorphins
- create a feeling of balance and well-being.
- uplifting
- improve hair and scalp conditions

Many people only worry about their hair's health when it starts to look dry or thinning. When the body is subjected to ill-health or stress, the hair is often affected and can become dry. Healthy hair should be promoted from childhood with the help of regular massage, and Indian women use oils such as coconut or almond to help nourish the hair and to keep its shiny appearance.

#### Spiritual and energetic benefits of massage.

For some, massage provides an increased awareness of the mind-body-spirit connection. The emotional and spiritual part of a person can be understood in many ways, all of which are personal and individual. Our spirit finds its regeneration in positive touch and can be renewed through touch. A giver's touch reflects their spirit as does the receiver's ability and openness to receive it.



#### *How often should we have an Indian Head Massage?*

This will depend on the client and the reason for treating. Some conditions respond well after one or two treatments. It is advisable to have an IHM treatment once a month as a preventative measure.

## Ayurveda Doshas

ASPECT OF CONSTITUTION	VATA	PITTA	KAPHA
Frame	Thin	Moderate	Thick
Hair	Black, dry, kinky	Early grey, red	Thick, oily, wavy
Eyes	Small, dull, brown, black	Green, grey, yellow	Big, attractive, blue, thick eyelashes
Personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active</li> <li>• Talkative</li> <li>• Do not sleep much</li> <li>• Emotionally insecure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn slowly</li> <li>• Good long-term memory</li> <li>• Sleep a lot</li> <li>• Affectionate</li> <li>• Heat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulate</li> <li>• Strong memories</li> <li>• Emotionally</li> <li>• Intense</li> <li>• Heavy</li> </ul>
Soothing Foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bananas</li> <li>• Mango</li> <li>• Pineapple</li> <li>• Onions</li> <li>• Carrots</li> <li>• Sweet potato</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cucumber</li> <li>• Broccoli</li> <li>• Potatoes</li> <li>• Sweet peppers</li> <li>• Apples</li> <li>• Grapes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunflower or pumpkin seeds</li> <li>• Raw honey</li> <li>• Apples</li> <li>• Pears</li> <li>• Dried fruits</li> <li>• Ginger</li> </ul>

