Foot Reflexology – Enhancing the Healing Process
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Foot reflexology, a complementary therapy gaining widespread popularity in the community, is an ancient holistic healing method with its origin in China and Egypt. The practice as we now know it has its origins in the study of Zone Therapy which utilizes the longitudinal lines of energy running through the body from the feet to the brain. The leading researcher in the West was Dr. William Fitzgerald, an ear, nose, and throat physician who practiced at St. Francis Hospital in Hartford in the early 1900s. He discovered that by applying pressure to key points on the extremities of the body, principally the feet, he could eventually bring about normal physiological functioning in other parts of the body. A physical therapist and colleague, Eunice Ingham, refined the practice in the 1930s and developed the foot reflexology “map” that is widely used today.

Using this reflexology “map” the practitioner applies a particular type of pressure and massage to specific reflex points, each of which corresponds energetically to a specific organ, gland, or system of the body (similar reflex points are also found on the hand). Stimulation of all these reflexes causes reactions in the corresponding body parts and in turn “massages” the entire body internally and externally through the feet. The benefits may include:
- inducing a deep state of relaxation
- improving circulation
- cleansing the body of toxins and impurities
- helping control the perception of pain by stimulating the release of endorphins.

It has been reported that 60-90% of office visits to primary care physicians are for stress related symptoms or illnesses. Reflexology can therefore be an effective intervention that can promote stress reduction as well as pain management, acceleration of the body’s own natural healing ability and return to homeostasis.

For more information on this topic and other complementary therapies, visit our website at www.harthosp.org/IntMed. To make an appointment for a session, call Integrative Medicine at 860-972-4444 or email us at Therapies.Integrative@hhchealth.org.

References
Gillander, Ann. The Joy of Reflexology
Hodgson, H. "Does reflexology impact on cancer patients' quality of life?", Nursing Standard, 14, 31, pp. 33-38

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