

# Our Peaceful Times

ISSUE #20: FROM PEACEFUL HEALING THERAPEUTIC MASSAGE 860-349-HEAL

## **OUR OFFICE HAS A NEW LOOK!**

As Peaceful Healing approaches our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary serving the community, we're continuing to renovate and upgrade our facilities! The new look and feel of the office is meant to facilitate peace, comfort, and healing. When you come in for your appointment or to pick up your holiday gift certificates, let us know what you think!

## **MASSAGE & THE COLD/FLU SEASON**

Control group studies show that massage therapy eases physical and mental stressors, which keeps your immune system strong and better able to fight off sickness and disease. People who make massage therapy a regular part of their lives get sick less often, so if you're not a fan of suffering through those nasty colds and flus, give us a call and make massage a pleasant addition to your life.

## **WINTER PARKING & APPOINTMENTS**

Winter weather will be upon us soon. If there's inclement weather the day of your appointment and traveling is unsafe or will cause you undue stress, please don't be afraid to call and reschedule. There's no sense in stressing to get here, have us ease your tension, and then undo it all as you white-knuckle your way home!

Likewise, during bad weather, feel free to park on the left-hand side of the main/upper driveway so your car is safer from snowplows and other vehicles.

## **BETTER KNOW A MUSCLE: NECK**

The bones of the spinal column consist of the cervical (neck) C1 - C7, thoracic (mid back) T1 - T12 (your ribs attach here), and lumbar (low back) L1 - L6, as well as the fused sacral bones S1 - S5, which form a rough triangle at the base of your spine, and your coccyx (tailbone) comprising of three additional fused bones. The spine serves to protect your spinal cord from damage and to provide a structural support for the structural bones of the body. Numerous tiny muscles attach to different points on the vertebrae and help stabilize, bend, and rotate the spinal column.

The neck muscles work hard to support your head and neck and control the movements of your neck and skull. Because the neck performs so many actions, it has many muscles, large and small, which work together to get the job done.

One muscle is the sternocleidomastoideus. While the name is definitely a long and complicated one, it describes the places where the muscle attaches. This muscle begins with an attachment point on the mastoid process—the large bump of bone just behind your ear—and then splits into two arms. One of those arms attaches to the clavicle (or collarbone) near the hollow at the base of your throat, the other to the top of your sternum (breastbone), just be-

low the hollow at the base of your throat. This muscle helps to rotate your head, tilt it to one side, and flex the neck forward.

The scalenes (scalenus anterior, scalenus medius, and scalenus posterior [anterior = front, medius = middle, and posterior = rear]) are located on the side of the neck. The tops of all three muscles attach at the sides of cervical vertebrae. The lower ends of the anterior and medius scalenes attach to the first rib, and the lower end of the posterior scalene attaches to the second rib. Together, the scalenes flex and rotate the neck, as well as lift the first two ribs to expand the rib cage when we breathe. You may be able to touch these muscles if you tilt your head to one side and feel along the exposed side of your neck from just behind the angle of the jawbone down into the space just behind your clavicle.

The rectus capitis posterior major and minor and obliquus capitis superior and inferior are located at the base of your skull where they attach the first two cervical vertebrae to the occiput (base of the skull). This group of muscles works to rotate the skull and tilt it back. They are also sometimes referred to as the "headache muscles" since, when they get tight, they can cause headaches. Due to other, larger muscles being in the way, you will not be able to feel these muscles directly.

The neck muscles are most commonly damaged in whiplash injuries, and are also often affected by poor sleeping and sitting postures. When the muscles are subjected to whiplash, the muscles are overstretched, causing microtears in the muscle fibers, which in turn cause the muscles to spasm painfully. While a whiplash accident is impossible to totally prevent, keeping the neck muscles as limber and healthy as possible should minimize the severity of the injury. Pain from poor sleeping or sitting posture is due to the muscles having to hold the neck or head in place for long periods of time. To minimize the "crick" in your neck while you sleep, make sure you use the proper size pillow for how you sleep. Side sleepers need a high pillow to keep the neck straight during sleep; back sleepers a medium one; and stomach sleepers a low pillow. Also be sure to pull the pillow down so the lower edge is nestled firmly beneath your neck (if you are a side-sleeper, it should be nestled in the space between your neck and shoulder) to eliminate any open spaces. If your posture while sitting gives you trouble, slowly look all around you to stretch your muscles and don't sit in one position for long periods of time.

If you are experiencing neck pain, cold packs are your best bet. However, if the injury is chronic, you can also use heat. You can also use a cervical or travel pillow to support your head and neck while sitting for long periods of time.

*Happy Holidays!*

*Jamie & Jenn*