**REFLEXOLOGY**

**Reflexology Defined**

Reflexology is the practice of applying pressure to the feet and hands utilizing specific thumb, finger and hand techniques without the use of oil, cream or lotion based on a system of zones and reflex areas that reflect an image of the body on the feet and hands with a premise that such work effects a physical change in the body.

## What is a reflexology chart?

A reflexology chart mirrors a reflection of the body on the feet and hands, left foot or hand representing the body's left half and right foot or hand its right half. In reflexology practice, technique is applied to the relevant reflex area(s) to prompt a change in the related part of the body. Research has demonstrated such effects for several reflex areas and their reflected parts of the body, i. e. the [kidney reflex areas and the kidneys](http://www.reflexology-research.com/controlled_studies_by_syst.htm#kidney); the [intestine reflex areas and the intestines](http://www.reflexology-research.com/controlled_studies_by_syst.htm#digestive) and the [brain reflex area and the brain](http://www.reflexology-research.com/fmri.html).

## The History of Reflexology

## by Barbara and Kevin Kunz

Foot work practices have existed throughout the history of humankind. Remnants of foot work practices span time and place from the [Physician's Tomb](http://www.reflexology-research.com/egypt.html) in Egypt of 2300 B.C. to the [Physicians Temple](http://www.reflexology-research.com/nara.html) in Nara, Japan, of 690 A.D. The authors have labeled this pattern as a form of archetype or archestructure. Archetypes are "symbolic image(s)...without known origin and they reproduce themselves in any time or in another part of the world--even when transmission by direct descent or 'cross fertilization' through migration must be ruled out" Jung, C.G., Man and His Symbols, Dell Publishing Co., 1968, p. 58). "An archestructure can now be defined as a felt or perceived function or structural feature of the nervous system, projected or unconsciously acted out in the lifestyle or the beliefs, customs, and social structures of the individuals concerned or of whole communities" (Gooch, S.F., Total Man, Ballantine Books, 1972 p. 299).

The modern history of reflexology is rooted in research about the reflex in Europe and Russia 125 years ago. The idea that a stimulus applied to the body produces a response was utilized as a therapeutic tool by British physicians and researchers who applied heat, cold, plasters, and herbal poultices to one part of the body to influence another. While such uses did not take root in the medical communities in the United States and Great Britain, the furthering of such ideas for therapeutic use continued in Germany and Russia throughout this century.

Russian physicians of the early 1900's followed the reflex research of Nobel Prize winner Ivan Pavlov to create reflex therapy. Their basic idea, to influence reflexes and thus brain-organ dynamics, survives as a medical practice today. to physician- researchers, such as Vladimir Bekterev who coined the word "reflexology" in 1917, an organ experiences illness because it receives the wrong operating instructions from the brain. By interrupting the body's misguided instructions, the reflex therapist prompts the body to behave in a better manner. Conditioning of better behavior is achieved by the application of a series of such interruptions.

American physiotherapist Eunice Ingham kept alive a specific practice, that of foot reflexology. She accomplished this by traveling around the country teaching groups of people, perpetuating a grassroots enthusiasm for the subject in the United States. A community of reflexology users emerged. Legal questions were raised about the practice of medicine without a license. Ms. Ingham's book of 1945 ascribed the workings of reflexology to the nervous system. The revised work published in 1954, deleted any such mention. the explanation of the workings of reflexology took on metaphorical terms that were to color the practice for decades to come.

The term reflexology itself was considered illegal until a legal skirmish over the publication of Mildred Carter's book *Helping Yourself with Foot Reflexology* in 1970. The U.S. postal Service asked that the publisher cease and desist publication of the book on the grounds that it consisted of the practice of medicine without a license. The publisher's attorneys successfully defended the publication of the book Subsequently the word could be used to describe one's practice; it was also used in the titles of books. The idea became widely disseminated as Mrs. Carter's book sold one million copies and became one of the best-selling titles ever for the publisher.

In the following quarter century, the idea gained informal sanctioning in the United States on a community level. Since then, practicing reflexologists have emerged, some 30 reflexology books have been published, and the number of magazine articles published has climbed by 500 percent since 1982. Television appearances by reflexologists have increased by 500 percent since 1988.

From: *Understanding the Science and Art of Reflexology*, Kevin and Barbara Kunz,Alternative and Complementary Therapies, April/ May 1995, p.183-186

**What are the benefits of reflexology ?**

Research has shown the specific techniques of reflexology to be effective and beneficial in many ways. A survey of 170 reflexology studies from 21 countries shows that reflexology is effective, impacting a variety of physical and psychological concerns. Reflexology:

 Creates relaxation: From the moment the reflexologist's hands start their work, the relaxation begins as shown in research using EEG brain activity. All together, 24 studies demonstrate reflexology's relaxation effects.

 Reduces pain: Pain reduction following reflexology work is documented in 27 studies including research showing impact on individuals of all ages and health states

 Ameliorates health concerns: Research shows that reflexology work helps indiviuals of all ages with some 78 health concerns ranging from aggressive behavior Êin children to urinary concerns of the elderly.

 Improves blood flow: Separate studies show that reflexology work increases blood flow to the feet, brain, kidneys and intestines.

 Aids post-operative recovery: Reflexology work aids recovery after surgery as shown by several studies, reducing pain and lessening the use of post operative analgesics.

 Impact on physiological measures (e. g. blood pressure and cholesterol; measurements by ECG, EEG, and fMRI)

 Enhances medical care: Reflexology helps where nothing else can for many: phantom limb pain sufferers, neuropathy patients, and hemodialysis patients to name a few.

 Benefits mental health: Research demonstrates that reflexology can reduce depression (11 studies) and anxiety (9 studies).

 Complements cancer care: Pain, nausea, vomiting, and/or anxiety eased for chemotherapy patients following reflexology work as shown by16 studies fom 7 countries.

 Eases pregnancy, delivery and post-partum effects: Women who received reflexology experienced shorter labor times and used less analgesia. In addition, reflexology showed a positive impact on postpartum depression, anxiety, urination and bowel movements.

In general terms, the benefits of reflexology have to do with the reduction of stress. Because the feet and hands help set the tension level for the rest of the body, they are an easy way to interrupt the stress signal and reset homeostasis, the body's equilibrium.

Reflexology is a complement to standard medical care. It should not be construed as medical advice. It should not be a replacement to medical help. Please use it wisely. We care about your safety.

## How do I get results with reflexology?

For best results, apply reflexology techniques to targeted reflex areas consistently. This can be accomplished with self reflexology techniques, those applied by family as well as with the guidance of the professional reflexologist.

You yourself can most easily provide reflexology work frequently and consistently, using self applied techniques to break up the stress patterns in your feet and hands. Apply pressure simply using a foot roller or, for the hands, a golf ball. Think morning, noon and night. Build reflexology into your life. It is easy to do reflexology while doing other activities. Put a foot roller under your desk at work, use a golf ball on your hands while waiting for the kids at school or do either while watching television. Be creative in how and where you apply techniques but be consistent.

Reflexology applied by family or friends provides several benefits: application of pressure techniques, non-invasive touch and an opportunity to visit.

The reflexologist can provide you with a relaxing experience, quality technique application as well as educate you in how to do it yourself.

## How does reflexology work?

Reflexology works as the pressure techniques applied to the feet or hands interact as a part of the body's nervous system creating: relaxation, improved circulation, exercise of the nervous system and the benefits of touch.

Pressure sensors in the feet and hands are a part of the body's reflexive response that makes possible the "fight or flight" reaction to danger. Feet ready to flee and hands ready to fight communicate with the body"s internal organs-think adrenal glands and adrenal... to make possible either eventuality. The sudden adrenal surge that enables a person to lift a car is an example of this coordinated activity. The perception of pressure by the feet and hands taps into the reflex network that makes possible our every move. Reflexology, consistently applied, provides an exercise of these pressure sensors and thus a conditioning of the internal organs to which they are inextricably tied.

**What techniques are used in reflexology?**



Pressure is applied to the feet and hands using specific thumb, finger and hand techniques. Stretch and movement techniques are utilized as "desserts" to provide relaxation to the foot. Oil, cream and lotion is not utilized in traditional reflexology work. Tools or instruments- such as a golf ball or wooden foot roller- are used for self help application only.