

Rethinking Reflexology

by Wendy Lewis, ARCB-Certified Reflexologist



Though reflexology is an alternative therapy with ancient roots, reflexology's relevance continues to grow in modern times. In a recent study, "Foot Reflexology: Recent Research Trends and Prospects," published by The National Library of Medicine, literature related to the field of foot reflexology published from 1991 to 2021 was analyzed. The findings revealed that the number of scientific articles on the topic has been steadily increasing every year, suggesting that interest and respect for reflexology continues to grow, even among those with backgrounds in traditional medicine.

Scientific communities are increasingly embracing reflexology, yet many public misconceptions persist. Here are the facts about three of these myths.

Feet Are Not Ugly

When removing their socks before a session, many clients apologize for the

appearance of their feet. But the reality is, feet are as diverse as their owners, and all are lovely in their own way. Some feet are large, dense, and inflexible, while others are small, soft and springy. Some may have stiff, arthritic toes, digits that have survived fractures, or toenails with old injuries. They tell the story of that client's life, health, and unique experiences, and that in itself is beautiful.

Reflexologists Do Not Diagnose or Detect Illness

Although reflexologists may detect cues from a client's body by reading their feet, only a medical doctor can legally diagnose health and medical conditions. It may be tempting to withhold some information from a reflexologist's intake form to see if they can sense medical conditions, but that is potentially dangerous and not advised; all pertinent health information

should be shared with medical and wellness professionals so they can best help.

Reflexologists may detect all sorts of different tissue textures. Some characteristics are fairly common, but most sets of feet are as unique as their owners. Repeat sessions with the same reflexologist helps the practitioner develop a sense of the unique landscape of each client's particular pair of feet and what is most typical for them.

The most important thing to be felt in the feet is what the client feels. And since each foot has 7,000 nerve endings, reflexology offers plenty of wonderfully therapeutic and relaxing sensations.

Reflexology Is More Than a "Foot Rub"

Though reflexology feels great and shares benefits with many bodywork modalities—such as stress relief, relaxation and wellness support—it is a distinctive practice, and much more than a great-feeling foot rub. In reflexology, the organs, structures and systems of the body are mapped out in the feet (and sometimes the hands, ears and face), and specific pressure techniques on these areas are believed to positively impact the entire body via the nervous system. Many clients find reflexology to be uniquely relaxing and calming among the many types of bodywork they've tried.

In fact, the scientific articles included in this study explored how "foot reflexology has been shown to have a moderating effect on anxiety, fatigue, and cancer, and is a topic of ongoing and future research." So, not only is reflexology something that feels wonderful, there is solid evidence that it promises many health benefits too.

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