



American
Organization for
Bodywork
Therapies of
Asia

Amma Bodywork Therapy: Long Definition

Amma, the oldest Chinese word to describe Bodywork, is an ancient healing system dating back about 5,000 years to a period of the legendary Yellow Emperor of China. The name “Am-ma” literally translates to “push-pull.” Derived from “Anma” in China, Amma is classic Korean Asian bodywork. It is rooted in the principles of Classic Chinese Medicine.

Amma Bodywork Therapy is a specialized form of somatic, skilled-touch therapy that combines deep tissue manipulation with the application of pressure, friction and touch to specific acupoints, energy channels, muscles, ligaments and joints. The Amma Therapist opens all of the tendinomuscular and primary energy channels first with a deep circular pressure, this frees the flow of energy allowing deeper penetration into acupoints more quickly. Amma Therapists are also usually trained the principles of holistic nutrition and eastern dietary principles.

How Amma Bodywork Therapy Works

Amma is rooted in the same fundamental medical principles as acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, focusing on the balance and movement of Qi (energy), within the body. The techniques of Amma aim to remove blockages and free the flow of Qi in the body – restoring, promoting, and maintaining optimum health. While the acupuncturist inserts needles into acupoints along the energy pathways of the body to stimulate and move Qi, the Amma Therapist relies primarily on the sensitivity and strength of the hands to manipulate the Qi.

A skilled therapist gathers information by reviewing information provided by the patient, tongue and pulse diagnosis, observation of signs and symptoms, listening to the patient’s complaints and palpation of the body. The purpose of the therapist’s assessment is to create a mind/body portrait that includes structural, emotional and energetic imbalances.

The Amma therapist lives in a world of palpation, therefore the hands and the fingers are essential data gathering devices. When palpating, specific attention is paid to the location of any areas of sensitivity or pain, and pain related to particular position or movement. Attention is also given to structural deviations, spasms, any palpable masses, skin temperature, and skin changes. Amma therapists are trained in specific hand techniques and exercises to properly develop lasting strength and sensitivity.

A Typical Session in Amma Bodywork Therapy

An Amma session usually lasts from 45 minutes to one hour. For this full body treatment, patients wear underpants and are fully draped at all times or they may wear a gown or loose clothing and are treated on a bodywork table. Before treatment, the Amma Therapist reviews the patient's case history.

After a complete assessment has been made, a treatment plan can be formulated. This plan may include the manipulation of specific acupoints and areas of treatment, recommendations for specific exercises, dietary plans, detoxification methods, and the use of appropriate herbal, vitamin, and supplementary preparations.

An important part of the Amma process is patient education, regarding appropriate recommendations on diet, vitamins, supplements, herbs and exercises, directed toward optimum health. Amma stresses patient responsibility and cooperation in following through with these recommendations. This is an essential component of successful therapy.

Benefits in Prevention and Healing

Amma has proven itself to be a powerful therapy for prevention and treatment of a wide range of conditions including: traumas from sprains, strains, and burns; arthritis; hypertension; diabetes; gastrointestinal diseases; circulatory problems; mental-emotional issues; early stage cancers; autoimmune diseases, such as scleroderma and lupus; neuromuscular diseases, such as myasthenia gravis; chronic fatigue syndrome; asthma; allergies; bronchitis; menopausal symptoms; infertility; female gynecological disorders, such as polycystic ovaries, endometriosis and fibroids. Amma has also proven exceptionally beneficial for infants and children in treating acute and chronic ear infections, upper respiratory infections, asthma, juvenile arthritis, teething, headaches, colds and coughs.

Because Amma works on both the primary and the tendino-muscular energy pathways of the body, it affects all the systems of the mind/body complex and can therefore treat most illnesses. Preventive Amma treatments, combined with proper diet and exercise, have been extremely effective in preventing further pathological changes from taking place and in reversing certain conditions. When a reversal of abnormal changes is not possible, the therapist can alleviate the symptoms and pain caused by these changes.

The true practice of Amma Bodywork Therapy involves great attention to detail, extraordinary sensitivity and kinesthetic awareness. The skill of the therapist in interpreting all the available data depends on the Asian diagnostic skills, sensitivity and intuitive ability that develop from the continual application of knowledge and palpation.