



THE PERFECT pleasure

Science supports what spa lovers have known forever—
treatments aren't self-indulgent, they're essential for health.

BY CANDICE MUTSCHLER

As the trend toward preventive medicine and wellness continues to grow, spas are becoming key players in the health industry. And as physicians promote the benefits of massage to patients, spas have responded by expanding their menus to include new treatments that rejuvenate from the inside out.

Island House Spa at Longboat Key Club and Resort is no exception. While guests certainly may enjoy a pedicure and other luxurious pleasures, the spa's certified massage therapists are trained in a wide array of disciplines that go beyond beauty and relaxation.

"The spa experience is about much more than pampering," says Lyanne Miranda, spa services and operational manager. "With today's level of stress and preoccupation, now more than ever, spa services are a necessity."

It's true. According to a survey sponsored by the American Massage Therapy Association, 59 percent of Americans report being more stressed this year than a year ago, and 36 percent of them sought massage for this reason. But the number of those getting massage for medical reasons didn't trail far behind. The "baby boomer" generation most readily sees the value in this more than any other demographic group, but people of all ages are visiting spas to help prevent a visit to the doctor.





“It should be part of your lifestyle, like going to the dentist or doctor,” Miranda suggests. “In our society, people are always saying, ‘I’ll take care of myself later,’ but they never stop until they just can’t keep going any more. And that’s not good.”

Research has shown the effectiveness of massage for relieving everything from fatigue to pain, for having a positive impact on the body’s immune system and blood pressure, and for arguably serving as a preventive tool for some diseases, such as osteoporosis and dementia.

“Ninety-five percent of all illness is caused or worsened by stress,” writes physician Mark Hyman, founder and medical director of the Ultra-Wellness Center in Lenox, Mass., and editor in chief of the medical journal *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*. Hyman reports a modern epidemic of stress-related disorders. “Unfortunately,” he adds, “we are not trained to address the stressful psychic loads that are the burden of the 21st century. And they are killing us.”

If that’s not incentive to get a massage, what is?

While stress is known to take its toll inside the body, it wreaks havoc on the surface, too. And nothing betrays lifestyle secrets faster than bad skin, poor posture or neglected hands and feet. Wellness aside, everyone wants to *look* their best—and Island House Spa offers treatments designed to buff, polish, knead and exfoliate any signs of stress away, literally from head to toe.

Try pairing a beneficial reflexology session with a paraffin treatment for an ecstatic experience. Slipping your feet into booties filled with warm wax is a

sensation you won’t soon forget. Facials, meanwhile, not only relax and alleviate stress, they provide deep cleansing and nourish the skin. Island House Spa uses Dermalogica products, one of the industry’s leading brands. “We have something for every skin type, from the mildest [products] for sensitive skin to Age Smart, our top anti-aging line,” Miranda says. One must-try facial involves the Galvanic Spa System, a hand-held device that emits low-level electric current to facilitate the delivery of ingredients to the skin. If you like it, you can take one home.

But back to massage. The new Bamboo Massage gives traditional Swedish or sports massage an exotic island twist. Therapists use warm bamboo in various ways to roll the tension away, gently coaxing the body to release all stiffness. “It’s a great way to offer Swedish or sport massage, because you can go really deep with the bamboo,” Miranda says. “Everyone who tries it loves it.”

Miranda suggests incorporating aromatherapy into any bodywork session for an added boost or deeper relaxation. “Aromatherapy has an effect on your state of mind, your mood. It can even aid in detoxifying the body, as well as energize or soothe. It’s great in combination with the oil.”

The concept of wellness is seeping into all aspects of daily life, with therapeutic touch ranking among the most widely practiced forms of alternative medicine. A trip to the spa these days is less about luxury and more about lifestyle, and that is a trend most are delighted to embrace.

As Miranda says, “Go have your massage, your facial, and after that you can conquer the world.”

GOOD STUFF

Island House Spa massage therapists regularly undertake further studies and certification to bring modern treatments to club members and resort guests. With a focus on wellness, these services not only feel good, they do good.

- **Reflexology:** Everyone loves a good foot massage, but reflexology is so much more. Certified clinicians strategically manipulate pressure points on the feet and hands said to connect to various body parts through the nervous system. Any body part that is the source of pain or illness can be strengthened by applying pressure to a corresponding location on the hands or feet. It’s a wonderful supplement to a full-body massage or on its own.

- **Craniosacral Therapy:** This light-touch therapy involves hands-on manipulation of the craniosacral system, a fluid circulatory system that surrounds and protects the brain and spinal cord. When cerebral and spinal fluids flow freely, the body’s ability to heal itself is said to increase. It’s a thoroughly enjoyable experience, performed by certified therapists.

- **Lymphatic Drainage Massage:** This light, rhythmical “detox” massage stimulates the lymphatic system, encouraging elimination of metabolic waste products, excess fluid and bacteria. It can play a vital role in regulating the body’s immune system and promote healing.

For more information about spa services, call 941-387-1583 or visit longboatkeyclub.com and follow the Spa link.

