



NEWSLETTER

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What's happening in the Store!



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

**Are you one of those people
who's hard to buy for ??**

**Why not ask Santa
(and everyone else :)**

for a gift certificate

from

My Reflexology Store!

*Wishing you all the very best this Holiday Season
and a Healthy, Happy New Year!*

Skin—Our Largest Organ

What a remarkable organ skin is, covering every part of our body. Most adults have two square yards of skin weighing 15-20% of their total body weight. Skin accommodates every stretch and twist that we make. It renews the epidermis (top layer) every month or so.

Our skin is filled with billions of cells, thousands of sensory points, sweat glands, sebaceous glands -- each performing its own function for keeping the skin healthy.

Skin is one of our excretory organs. Anything applied to the skin can be absorbed and transferred directly into the bloodstream; good or bad. It can work in reverse as well and is our first line of defense, as part of the immune system, to get rid of foreign invaders, infections, dehydration, injuries and other outside elements. Skin's No. 1 enemy is the sun.

The skin is a powerful interface between the mind, the body, and the external world. An emerging concept recognizes the skin as an almost independent, untamable intelligence; ie blushing that inadvertently reveals the mind's secrets, goose bumps that warn when something is amiss, or the crawling skin that shows your fear. The skin is also an endocrine organ and manufactures hormones like vitamin D for the rest of the body, and steroids and thyroid hormones for its own use. The skin makes many of the neurotransmitters and hormones found in the brain.

Diseases that affect the systems of the body can often give an early warning on the skin:

- Leukemia has been known to trigger hives.
- If you have an infected heart valve, bits of the infection can break off, get stuck in tiny vessels, and show up as streaks under your fingernails.
- Pregnancy makes some women itch all over.
- Anemia can cause the hair to fall out.
- Lupus has a characteristic butterfly rash, spreading light pink across the top of cheeks and the bridge of the nose.
- One of the first signs of the autoimmune disorder scleroderma is tight, thick skin.

These aren't absolute of course, but combined with other signs such as weight loss or fatigue, symptoms on the skin can give doctors a hint of what is going on below.

While all this information is important to know; what resonates with us as Reflexologists is the fact that skin is the conduit for the network of nerves that yields our sense of touch. We use touch in so many ways and know that when we exchange caring touches with others, levels of stress and anxiety are reduced – and – when we receive touch – a hug, some **Reflexology**.... It contributes toward and enhances our wellbeing. **THIS** is what we bring to our clients!

Dermatomes and Reflexology

A **dermatome** is an area of skin that is supplied by a single spinal nerve. There are eight cervical nerves, twelve thoracic nerves, five lumbar nerves and five sacral nerves. Each of these nerves relays sensation (including pain) from a particular region of skin to the brain.

Along the thorax and abdomen the dermatomes are like a stack of discs forming a human, each supplied by a different spinal nerve. Along the arms and the legs, the pattern is different: the dermatomes run longitudinally along the limbs. Although the general pattern is similar in all people, the precise areas of innervation are as unique to an individual as fingerprints.

Clinical significance

Dermatomes are useful in neurology for finding the site of damage to the spine. Because painful dermatomes are symptoms, not causes, of the underlying problem, surgery should never be determined by a pain. Aching in a dermatomic area indicates a lack of oxygen to the nerve as occurs in inflammation somewhere along the path of the nerve. Pain in a dermatomic area (that is not accompanied by heat, as would occur in infection) is indicative of a referral pattern from some other source. This "other source" will not be painful until it is palpated and is usually found on the left side of the vertebral column at the level or one level above or below the dermatomal region of the experienced pain. This information is important in the clinical relevance of dermatomes in that dermatomes are not good measures of dysfunction (that is, non-pathological states as experienced by most people in chronic pain).

Viruses that infect spinal nerves such as *Herpes zoster* infections (shingles), can reveal their origin by showing up as a painful dermatomic area. *Herpes zoster*, a virus that is dormant in the dorsal root ganglion, migrates along the spinal nerve to affect only the area of skin served by that nerve. Symptoms are usually unilateral but in the immune suppressed, they are more likely to become bilateral and symmetrical, meaning that the virus is present in both ganglia of a dorsal root ganglion pair.

To see a Dermatome Map of the body:

http://www.backpain-guide.com/Chapter_Fig_folders/Ch06_Path_Folder/4Radiculopathy.html

To read a research study of Reflexology and Dermatomes: Global Effect of Reflexology on Blood Flow

Research Study By M. Piquemal, M.D., E.E.

Presented at the 10th ICR International Conference in Amsterdam, September 2005.

http://www.reflexology-usa.org/assets/Piquemal_Article.pdf

Located on the RAA website.

Nancy Bartlett, NBCR

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