

What is reflexology?

Reflexology is the technique of applying gentle pressure to reflex areas on the feet or hands to bring about a state of deep relaxation and to stimulate the body's own healing processes. It is a natural therapy that can also facilitate more vital energy, help boost the immune system and create a stronger body and calmer mind.

Reflexology is a safe, natural therapy that helps to give your body what it needs – that might be conceiving or carrying a baby to full term, a reduction in the symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome, assistance in losing weight or in feeling younger and looking healthier. In this book you will discover how reflexology and a holistic approach to health can help you achieve and fulfil both emotional and physical goals.

The theory of reflexology

The theory underlying reflexology is that the organs, nerves, glands and other parts of the body are connected to reflex areas or reflex points on the feet and hands. These areas are found on the soles of the

Better emotional and physical health can be promoted through the help of healing hands and reflexology.





Reflexology can create a healthier and happier you.

feet and palms of the hands, as well as on the top and sides of the feet and hands. By stimulating these areas using a compression technique and a form of massage with your thumbs, fingers and hands, you can create a direct response in a related body area. For example, by working on the head reflex (which is found on the big toe), you can activate the body's own healing processes to help alleviate headaches.

The right foot and hand represent the right side of the body, while the left foot and hand represent the left side; and according to 'zone therapy' (see page 16), there are ten different zones in the body. The feet are most commonly worked

on in reflexology, because practitioners feel they are normally more responsive to treatment than the hands, since they contain a larger treatment area and so the reflex points are easier to identify; and, because the feet are usually protected by shoes and socks, they are more sensitive to treatment. However, the hands can be used for treatments just as effectively and are great to work on, especially when giving yourself reflexology.

Creating a state of balance

Reflexology is all about bringing balance, harmony and a sense of well-being to the body. At times, we find ourselves feeling 'out of sorts or ungrounded', and our body

needs equilibrium in order to keep working healthily. Even a very light reflexology treatment can help create this sense of balance.

Reflexology is not a therapy used to diagnose illness; it is not a medical treatment. It does not cure – only the body can do that. Instead it facilitates healing within the body. It is virtually impossible to determine how long it will take an individual to feel and enjoy the benefits of reflexology. Everything starts with one small step, but it is the commitment to reflexology that can drive forward a positive outcome.

How to use this book

This book is designed to give you a comprehensive approach to reflexology and a holistic approach to health, including diet and lifestyle changes. It incorporates a variety of treatment sequences that aim to suit the needs of you, your friends and your family, and which are suitable for all ages. After an introduction to the way reflexology works and essential preparation steps, Parts 4, 5 and 6 offer numerous foot-reflexology and power-treatment sequences, while Part 7 presents some hand-reflexology sequences. All the treatment sequences are simple to follow and are the same

sequences that you could expect from a professional treatment.

You can apply the foot-reflexology treatments and any of the specialized treatment sequences daily, every other day, weekly, or as you wish. The general foot treatment in Part 4 (see pages 136–167) covers all the systems and parts of the body and can help with most conditions, as well as reducing the effects of stress on the body. In Part 5 the focus is on specific ailments, and here you will find power-reflexology treatment sequences that will help you treat common conditions in the body, ranging from acne and asthma to psoriasis and a sore throat. Part 6 contains specialized treatment sequences and focuses separately on moods and emotions, women, men, pregnancy, young children, the golden years and couples. These sequences will help you adjust your treatments to treat certain medical problems and ailments.

Hand reflexology is perfect for self-treatment, treating the elderly, giving a treatment in a few minutes or while on the move, and for deep relaxation. The general treatment sequence in Part 7 (see page 374–389) should suit everyone's needs and is a great experience to give as well as to receive. Working on your own hands is self-empowering.

The roots of reflexology

The very roots of reflexology and its relationship with healthcare and astrology are believed to date back to ancient Egypt, where astrologer/physicians looked towards the stars to provide a theoretical basis on which to treat patients.

Ancient Egypt

The oldest documentation depicting the practice of reflexology was discovered in the tomb of an Egyptian physician called Ankmahor, dated around 2500 BCE. Ankmahor was considered one of the most influential people at that time, second only to the king. Within his tomb were found many medically related paintings, and the one shown here is believed to be the earliest example of reflexology. Two patients are receiving reflexology on their hands and feet. 'Don't hurt me', one patient says in the inscription; and the practitioner's reply is, 'I shall act so you praise me'.

Reflexology was obviously being practised either as a preventative to ill health or to help ease patients' medical conditions; either way, it is clear that the practitioners wished to meet their patients' needs. Working with a reflexologist, the physician would have devised individual

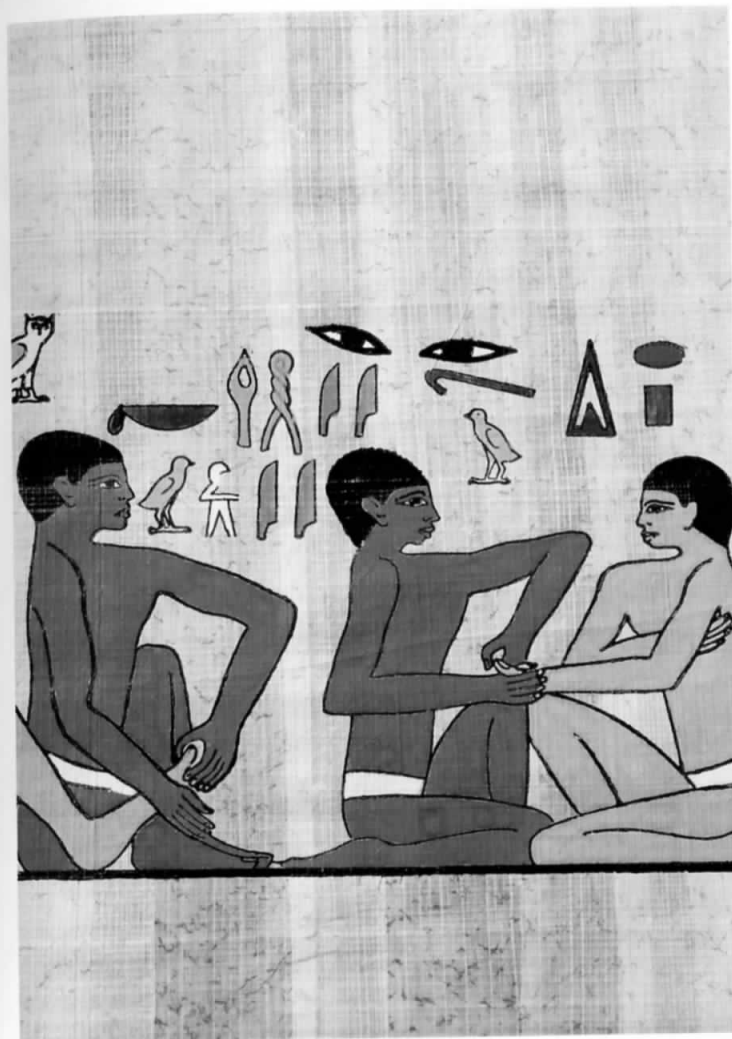
treatment plans for his patients that focused on the prevention of illness or on treating a current condition – so that practitioners were acting 'so you praise me'.

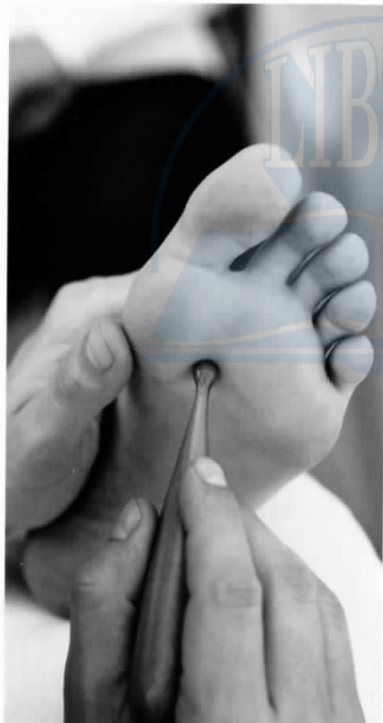
Over the years, various forms of reflexology have been practised and developed in America, Africa and the Far East. These often developed in different ways, with different lengths of treatment, heavier or lighter pressure, and even the use of implements such as small sticks or the end of a pipe.

Modern reflexology: the pioneers

Dr William Fitzgerald was one of the pioneers of modern reflexology. An American laryngologist who carried out his most significant work in the early 1900s, he had been aware that Native Americans were using techniques of pressure-point therapy to relieve pain. He also found that there was a lot of research developing in Europe on the functioning of the nervous system and the effects of stimulation of the sensory pathways on the

This early painting of reflexology was found in the tomb of the ancient Egyptian physician Ankmahor.





The Asian Rwo Shur method, which focuses on revitalization rather than relaxation, using a small stick.

rest of the body. Inspired by his research, Dr Fitzgerald decided to experiment on his patients with pain relief for minor surgery, and the result was the discovery of 'zone therapy', with energy lines running through

the body (see page 16), on which the modern form of reflexology was subsequently based.

The Rwo Shur method

In many parts of Asia, including Taiwan, China and Singapore, the Rwo Shur method of reflexology is practised. This can be quite painful to receive because it involves a combination of thumb-sliding and pressure techniques, incorporating the knuckles and sometimes small wooden sticks. The pressure is very firm and the therapist uses a cream rather than a powder; this allows for a fast, efficient and flowing motion. You can normally expect a session to last for about 30 minutes, with the focus being on revitalization rather than relaxation.

The Rwo Shur method was developed in Taiwan by Father Joseph Eugster, a Swiss missionary. Having experienced the benefits of reflexology himself, he saw the potential to help thousands of needy people and began to treat and then train others in reflexology.

The Ingham method

This technique forms the basis for the way in which most reflexology is practised around the world today. It was pioneered and developed in America in the early

1930s by the late Eunice Ingham, who is considered by most to be the 'mother of reflexology'. She made the feet specific targets for reflexology because they are particularly sensitive, and developed maps of the entire body on the feet (see pages 40–49), based on her research in the practice of reflexology.

She also developed a method of using the thumbs and fingers known as the Ingham compression technique. In this method, pressure is applied by 'thumb-walking', in which the thumb or finger bends and straightens while maintaining constant pressure across the area of the foot that is being worked.

Eunice Ingham introduced her work to the non-medical community because she realized how reflexology could help the general public. Her techniques were simple to apply, and people could learn how to use reflexology to help themselves, their family and friends. She wrote two books on reflexology, *Stories the Feet Can Tell* (1938) and *Stories the Feet Have Told* (1963).

A reflexologist practising the Ingham method uses powder rather than cream, and a session generally lasts for about 60 minutes, although this depends on the health of the client. The focus is on relaxation and balancing the body

systems, and the therapist works with a pressure that is constantly adjusted in order to avoid discomfort. The session is holistic, with the reflexologist considering the impact that the client's lifestyle has on their health. He or she will adjust the treatment sequence to suit each person, and although all the reflexes are worked, some are emphasized a little more than others.



Powder, towels and water should be laid out in readiness before the client arrives and treatment begins.

Zone therapy

Zone therapy is the foundation of modern reflexology, whereby reflexologists apply pressure to (or massage) specific areas of the feet or hands, stimulating the circulation and nerve impulses to promote health throughout 'zones' of the body.

The principle of energy zones, and the disease and rejuvenation of energy pathways, has been known for centuries. Harry Bond Bressler, who investigated the possibility of treating organs in the body through pressure points, stated in his book *Zone Therapy* (1955) that 'Pressure therapy was well known in the middle countries in Europe and was practised by the working classes of those countries as well as by those who catered to the diseases of royalty and the upper classes.' This form of reflexology seems to have been practised as far back as the 14th century.

Dr William Fitzgerald

The American Dr William Fitzgerald is considered to be the founder of zone therapy. During his research into pain relief he established that pressure applied to one part of the body could have an anaesthetic effect on another part, away from the pressure site. For example,

applying wooden clothes pegs to the fingers created an anaesthetic affect on the ear, nose, face, jaw, shoulder, arm and hand, and in this way he was able to perform minor surgery using just zone therapy, without anaesthetics.

Dr Fitzgerald finally published a book on zone therapy in 1917, which divided the body into ten longitudinal sections, and then charted the longitudinal zones of the body, with five on each side (see page 18). Modern reflexology is based on this idea of zone therapy. Using pressure on the toes, for instance, reflexologists can help with the pain associated with sinusitis, can drain the sinuses and strengthen them, in order to avoid future bouts of sinusitis. This pressure, applied to any of the ten zones, creates a signal throughout the nervous system to the brain, which in turn stimulates the internal organs to regulate and improve the way they function.

Applying pressure to an area can help with pain relief. The roots of this form of treatment date back to the Middle Ages.



The zone therapy chart

The body is divided into ten longitudinal zones, which provide a simple numbering sequence. Each toe falls into one zone, and there are five zones in each foot, with the big toe as zone one, through to the little toe, which is zone five; the fingers link up to the zones in the same way. Zones are distributed up the body like slices, and when you work on the feet, you are automatically working through the whole of the human body.

The principle is that, within these zones, energy runs up and down between all the parts of the body. This energy connection should be free-flowing, in order that all the parts of the body – organs, muscles, nerves, glands and blood supply – work in harmony and at the optimum level for good health. If there is a block of the body's natural energy, it will have an effect on any organ or part of the body that lies within that particular zone.

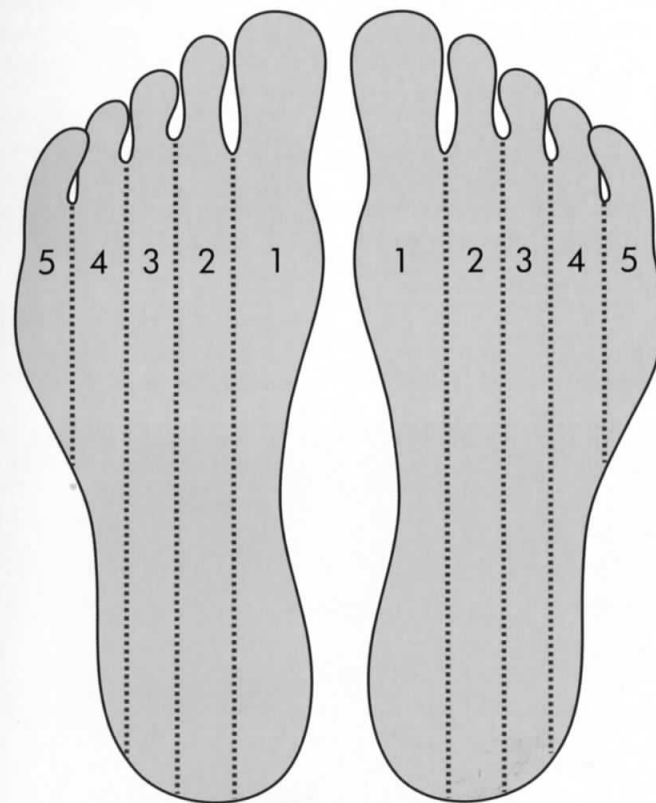
Balancing the zones

If a reflexologist finds sensitivity in one spot of the feet or hands, this indicates that there is an imbalance in the entire length of that zone. For example, if someone is suffering from conjunctivitis in the right eye, zone therapy would suggest that this

creates an energy imbalance in the right kidney and in any other bodily structure lying in that zone, causing it not to function as effectively as it should.

Each organ or part of the body is represented on the hands and feet. Massaging or pressing each area can stimulate the flow of energy, blood, nutrients and nerve impulses to the corresponding body zone, and thereby relieve ailments in that zone. The reflexes on the feet and hands are effective because they are situated at the ends of the zones and are therefore more sensitive than other parts of the body.

ENERGY ZONES



- Zone 1 – big toe
- Zone 2 – second toe
- Zone 3 – third toe
- Zone 4 – fourth toe
- Zone 5 – little toe