

## Ruth Duddy, L CSP ( Assoc ),

Remedial, Indian Head and On-Site Massage. I joined the Rosemount Centre in April last year. I qualified in Remedial Massage from the Northern Institute of Massage in 1999 and then went on to achieve the college's Advanced Diploma in Remedial and Manipulative Therapies. Since then I have also qualified in Indian Head Massage and On-Site Acupressure Massage, practising in Northern Ireland and the South of France, before coming to Aberdeen.



## A Right Pain in the ... Arm (and Hand)

Did you know that a new fashion is sweeping the country; popular among the working population, irrespective of age and gender? Well, maybe 'popular' is not the right word; I should say common and really not all that welcome. The last couple of years have seen a vast increase among my clientele of complaints of pain, tingling, tightness or weakness in the hand and arm; so much so it would seem almost fashionable!

It would be wrong to generalise about all cases, but unless the complaint has an obvious or specific cause, such as a sporting injury, repetitive strain injury, or the onset of arthritis for example, most cases present as an ache, tingling, stiffness or feeling of weakness in the hand, wrist and/or arm, sometimes extending up into the shoulder and lower neck area. The culprit for this 'non-specific complaint' is more often than not pressure on one of the nerves originating in the neck area, specifically in the mid to lower cervical and upper thoracic spine. It is from here that the nerves which make up the brachial plexus originate, supplying the muscles, blood vessels and connective tissue of the upper arm.

So what can be done to relieve and prevent this condition? What can a massage therapist do for you and how can you avoid becoming a 'follower of fashion'?

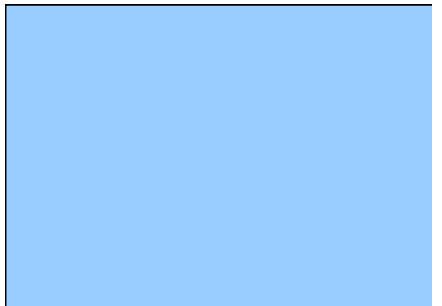
The symptoms of 'trapped' nerves can be caused by muscular tightness and imbalances and/or misalignments of the spine. It is useful to remember that muscles hold bones in place; manipulation of the spine can be extremely effective in relieving an acute condition, but in many cases it may be the muscles that have pulled the vertebrae out of alignment in the first place, or are causing pressure on a disk. Treating the soft tissue can provide a gentler yet long lasting result.

In addition, a massage appointment can treat the whole area, not just the spine. Pressure is not always on the nerve root, and can occur at any point along the nerve pathway. A Remedial Massage treatment for such a condition will relax, stimulate, and encourage the healthy working of all the muscles and nerves in the hand, arm, neck and shoulder, while also checking for misalignments or other abnormalities of the spine. A series of active, passive and resisted stretches is very effective in getting things back to normal. It is worth noting however, that if the symptoms are particularly severe, or are not relieved by massage, then a medical appointment can be worth pursuing to at least put your mind at rest about possible disk lesions (herniations or prolapses).

We can then talk through ways in which you can help yourself, and yes, it's those sedentary lifestyles and poor posture getting the blame again. However much we'd like to sit slumped at our desks, we have to face facts that it takes a tremendous toll on the body and the only person who can do something about this is you! Now the good news, there is hope.

Firstly, check your workstation and take half an hour to re-arrange your desk to a more comfortable position, one that doesn't have you aching and in pain two days after returning from holiday. Similarly give some thought to your sleeping position and the type and height of your pillow.

The next thing to remember is that the lift for correct posture comes from the middle girdle, mainly the abdomen, not the shoulders, which should be lowered and relaxed. Then imagine a cord lifting you up from the crown of your head, back of neck straight and elongated. This will seem difficult at first and you may well find yourself slumped again into what is a more usual and comfortable position for you, but just check in on yourself now and again, and it will become easier over time as your postural muscles regain their strength. Exercises such as yoga and pilates are both invaluable in maintaining a healthy spine and improving posture and flexibility.



Appointments with Ruth can be arranged at Reception

01224 636378  
admin@rosemountcentre.com

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