



Reiki and Breast Cancer

International Association
of Reiki Professionals



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A breast cancer diagnosis is one of the most difficult situations someone can face. The pain, stress and trauma involved are unparalleled, and patients dealing with this condition need all of the comfort and support they can get. Recently, many breast cancer patients have become interested in the idea of using Reiki to help with the symptoms of this condition, the side effects of cancer treatment and the stress that accompanies breast cancer. In fact, researchers have even conducted studies to identify and evaluate the effects of Reiki on patients with breast cancer. These results of these studies indicate that Reiki may be a valuable component of a breast cancer patient's treatment plan.

Dealing with Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is one of the most pervasive conditions affecting women around the world. It occurs when a cancerous tumor develops in the breast tissues. As the condition progresses, cancer can spread to other locations in the body. If the condition is left untreated or doesn't respond to treatment, it can be fatal.

The incidence of breast cancer throughout the world keeps increasing every year, with nearly 2 million cases diagnosed annually. Although many cases of breast cancer can be cured, this disease still claims the lives of more than 500,000 women in the world each year. Even those women who are able to overcome their disease must undergo a variety of difficult treatments to remove and/or kill the cancer cells, including surgery, chemotherapy, radiation and more. During and after treatment, women must deal with pain, anxiety, fear and depression.



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What is Reiki?

The word “Reiki” translates to “universal life energy.” The technique was developed in Japan and hinges on the belief that pain, illness and other negative conditions occur because spiritual energy pathways in the body are either disturbed or blocked. During a Reiki session, the practitioner encourages the client’s energy to flow freely throughout the body. Once this energy is flowing properly, pain sensations decrease and the body can begin to heal itself more effectively.

Reiki is non-invasive and involves only light touch. During a Reiki session, the practitioner will place his or her hands in up to 15 specific positions above the client’s body. He or she may also touch the patient lightly. Each hand position will be held for up to five minutes at a time. The entire session will last for approximately one hour.

Benefits of Reiki for Breast Cancer Patients

Although Reiki is not a substitute for traditional cancer treatment, it may provide a number of benefits for patients with breast cancer. This technique can be used for patients who have just learned of their diagnosis, patients who are already involved in treatment protocols and patients who are recovering from breast cancer. Some of the benefits of Reiki treatment for individuals with breast cancer may include:

Reduction in sensations of pain.

Pain is one of the hallmarks of cancer, whether it is experienced during treatment or as the disease progresses. Regardless of the reason for the pain, Reiki may reduce these sensations, making patients more comfortable as they deal with their disease.

Improved mood.

Many patients with breast cancer experience depression and anxiety related to their illness. Reiki treatments may improve the mood of a cancer patient, which enhances his or her quality of life. Alleviating stress and anxiety may also improve the patient's outlook, thus making him or her more proactive and willing to comply with other treatment recommendations.

Less stress.

Nothing is more stressful than dealing with something as serious as breast cancer. Reiki may reduce stress levels so that cancer patients can relax and focus on getting better.

Better quality of sleep.

In patients that experience a state of relaxation after Reiki sessions, the quality of sleep may improve. This is beneficial to breast cancer patients because it improves their mood and facilitates the body's ability to heal itself.

In addition, because Reiki is completely non-invasive and causes virtually no side effects, it is appropriate for most breast cancer patients. Reiki won't interfere with any other cancer treatments, either, so it can be used safely at any stage of treatment. Even if a breast cancer patient has never participated in a Reiki session before, he or she can begin treatment at any time.

Research Supports the Effectiveness of Reiki



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Recent research studies support the effectiveness of Reiki in patients dealing with all types of cancer, including breast cancer. For example, according to Penn medicine, the Abramson Cancer Center has released reports showing that, when combined with traditional treatments, the use of Reiki can reduce stress levels, alleviate anxiety, improve relaxation and reduce perceptions of pain in patients with cancer. Likewise, according to the American Cancer Society, one research study showed that cancer patients participating in Reiki sessions were less likely to experience pain than those who were not participating in Reiki sessions.

Anecdotal evidence provides additional support for Reiki's benefits. Patients have reported feeling more relaxed after Reiki treatments, even in the later stages of cancer. Patients have also reported feeling more mentally and emotionally balanced because of Reiki treatments. Some patients have even said that participating in Reiki treatments reduced the side effects they experienced because of cancer treatment, including nausea and vomiting.

Finding a Reiki Practitioner

Both scientific research and anecdotal reports from cancer patients indicate that Reiki may benefit individuals who are dealing with breast cancer. As a result, many breast cancer patients are now incorporating Reiki into their cancer treatment programs. If you are interested in learning more about Reiki or you would like to begin participating in sessions, you can get started by [searching for a Reiki practitioner on our site](#).

**This article appeared in The Reiki Times, the official magazine of the International Association of Reiki Professionals.

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Sources: <http://news.pennmedicine.org/inside/2014/01/reiki-a-light-touch-that-helps-cancer-patients.html>, <http://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatmentsandsideeffects/complementaryandalternativemedicine/manualhealingandphysicaltouch/reiki>, <http://www.wcrf.org/int/cancer-facts-figures/data-specific-cancers/breast-cancer-statistics>

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