

What Is Rolfing®?

Rolfing is an original and scientifically validated system of body restructuring and movement education. Through the ten session Rolfing series the body is balanced in relationship to itself and within the field of gravity by working with the connective tissue.

The scientific theory that a physical object vertically aligned within the field of gravity moves through space more efficiently is one of the key principles of Rolfing. This balance in the field of gravity is achieved by bringing segments of the body (head, neck, torso, pelvis, legs and feet) into a more structurally organized relationship with one another. As Dr. Rolf said, “Gravity is the therapist.”

A professional Rolfer™ uses physical pressure to stretch and guide the connective tissue, lengthening and organizing it, allowing for more efficient, flexible movement. The person being Rolfed participates in the process by moving, breathing and releasing the holding patterns within the connective tissue, allowing the innate balance of the body to become the teacher.

The connective tissue or myofascial system which supports the soft tissues, determines the spacing and positioning of bones, the direction of muscle pulls and movement and gives the body its shape. The connective tissue system provides a structural, physiological and energetic medium for a communication network throughout the body.

The many results of Rolfing differ from person to person. Generally, anyone experiencing Rolfing can expect to feel more vertically aligned within the field of gravity and, consequently, have more lift - less drag as they move. They have more vitality and energy, more ease in deeper breathing, increased flexibility, relief from pain, better coordination, and experience greater physical and emotional balance in their lives.

Who Gets Rolfed?

People with:

- chronic pain conditions.
- acute injuries or trauma.
- poor posture.
- shoulders up in their ears.
- computer “mouse” arm.

People in:

- high stress or physically demanding jobs.

People who use:

- their bodies extensively in their work and want to improve performance and reduce risk of injury.
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People who believe:

a balanced, responsive body is necessary for their full development as human beings.

Who Benefits From Rolfing?

People who are in high stress or physically demanding jobs

People who suffer tension or injury-related aches and pains

People who regard physical harmony as important to good health

People who believe they are living and working below their inherent capabilities

People involved in physical activities such as sports, yoga, dance, etc.

People who consider a balanced, responsive body necessary for the full development of human potential

People in every age group - infants to seniors

Rolfing infants and children helps their healthy development and maturation by stimulating and facilitating the integration of all body systems by working with the connective tissue. This unique approach recognizes our lifelong relationship with gravity, the relationship of the body and emotions, and the importance of touch in connecting with others

Structural Integration

The Ida P. Rolf method of structural integration. SI for structural integration is a process of fascial work that, unlike Connective Tissue Massage, addresses holding patterns in deeper layers of the body. In a series of ten sessions the practitioner remolds and integrates one's posture from foot to head, creating anti-gravity in the body which lifts it up, reorganizing a person around a Line that connects him to the Earth while opening him toward the heavens. The work combines manual manipulation of connective tissue with an educational piece at the end of each session to teach you how to use your new body in order to maintain freedom and length. Rather than constantly being at war with gravity, SI helps you relate to it in a more comfortable way. As no two people are alike, the benefits differ among clients. Generally folks report a disappearance of chronic pain and discomfort, an increase in flexibility and breathing, more fluid movement, and being more comfortable in their own skins. Dr. Rolf believed that when the human body works correctly, the force of gravity flows freely through, allowing it to heal itself. Connective tissue is the medium for SI, as it wraps and binds everything in the body. It is around and through muscles, around veins, nerves, organs, arteries, bone, etc. With injuries, gravity, sickness, everyday stress, postural habits and emotional trauma, connective tissue gets shortened, twisted, stuck together and dehydrated. When it is in this "random" condition, bones get pulled out of alignment, muscles become short and twisted, nerves are compressed, and organs fall out of position. As connective tissue is lengthened it becomes more pliable and hydrated, permitting the body to open in width, length and depth, giving muscles, joints, bones, nerves, etc., the space to fall back into place where they belong and function with more fluidity. SI helps clients connect with their true selves, their Core, often for the first time in

their lives. Like unpeeling the layers of an onion, SI can unlock one's spiritual self, repressed body memories, and long lasting comfort in the body that most everyone wishes for. There is a 3D effect that happens when tension is released in many layers, where the body is balanced uniformly. As a result, emotional surfacing often occurs during or after a session, which can be incredibly freeing.

The Ten Sessions

The basic Rolfing series consists of ten sessions. A Rolfer starts by evaluating the client's structure and by taking photographs for later reference. The client is then asked to lie on a table, as the Rolfer sensitively applies just the right amount of pressure where the fascia is restricted.

Rolfers don't just work with the connective tissue; they work with rhythms of respiration and other responses of the body. They also educate the client in ways of using the new-found freedom.

The client may be asked to breathe into the area being worked and/or to make synchronized movements. The combination of applied pressure and synchronized response frees and re-positions the connective tissue and aligns the body's segments.

Each Rolfing session builds upon the results of the previous one, so that the results are cumulative. The first seven sessions remove strain from specific areas of the body: the lower back, neck, knees, etc. the remaining sessions organize and align the body as a whole, resulting in better balance, enhanced freedom of movement, and a higher energy level.

Sessions last from one and a half to two hours. The amount of time between sessions varies and is determined on an individual basis. The average spacing is a week to two weeks.

While the basic ten sessions lay the foundation for an integrated body structure, many people choose to come in for additional sessions to continue their healing process or as preventative maintenance.

Definition

Rolfing® or Rolf therapy is the manipulation or deep tissue massage of the body's connective tissue and muscles, in order to realign and balance the body's structure. This leads to improved posture, function, and general physical and emotional health. Rolfing is the popular name for Structural Integration.

Purpose

Rolfing is not a cure for any particular disease or physical problem, but is rather a systematic approach that attempts to restore balance to the entire body. This approach recognizes that the connective tissue (fascia) forms a continuous web throughout the body. With the body in a state of balance, a person's nervous system, organs, mind, and natural healing system can function more efficiently.

Precautions

Many describe Rolfing (or deep tissue manipulation) as an uncomfortable technique, and some say it is mildly painful, especially at first. Since it involves vigorous manipulation by the practitioner, it is not recommended for those with a strong aversion to being touched. It is not recommended for anyone with a specific disease, like cancer, or an inflammatory condition, like arthritis. Rolfing practitioners are trained and certified only by the Rolf Institute of Structural Integration. As of 1996, there were about seven hundred such institutes in the United States and nine hundred worldwide.

Description

Rolfing was originated by American biochemist, Ida P. Rolf, Ph.D. (1896-1979), who discovered in the 1930s that the body's fascia, or network of connective tissue that encases and connects all muscles and bones, could be manipulated and actually reshaped. Reshaping was necessary, she argued, since the body eventually gets pulled out of alignment by the effects of gravity. When this occurs, it is the muscles rather than the bones that bear the weight of gravity, and over time the body's fascia or connective tissue loses some of its pliability and becomes thickened and hardened. Eventually they act more like binding straps and the muscles atrophy, or shrink.

An unbalanced body that is "at war" with gravity shows such outward signs as slouching with the head forward or standing overly erect and bowing backward, and often has flat feet or high arches. Besides gravity, the body must contend with the effects of disease or trauma, job-related conditions, and even emotional distress.

Treatment usually consists of ten weekly sessions, each lasting 60-90 minutes. During treatments the practitioner reworks by hand the fascial tissue of the patient's entire body until it becomes elastic and pliable again. This loosening and releasing of the adhesions in the fascia allows the muscles to lengthen and return to their normal, vertical alignment. It also restores a greater freedom of movement. During the first session, the patient's medical history is taken. Photographs of the patient's structure may also be taken before and after treatment to help review the progress and effectiveness of the therapy. Patients usually undress to their underwear and lie down on a massage table. The rolfer then applies pressure with fingertips, hands, knuckles, and elbows to work on the connective tissue. Often, the practitioner begins with the rib cage and upper body to allow deeper breathing, and then gradually moves to other parts of the body.

Many practitioners in the world of body/mind thinking believe that the body holds emotional issues. During the Rolfing sessions, there may be a release of tension that has been held in the tissue for years as blocked emotional energy related to deep-seated feelings. The experienced practitioner is trained to recognize this connection between the mind and the body and can help patients deal with any issues that may emerge during treatment.

Risks

When delivered by a trained professional, Rolfing is safe for both adults and children, but is not a substitute for medical treatment. A modified version is used for women who are three or more months pregnant.

Normal results

The benefits of Rolfing can include pain relief, greater range of motion, increased breathing capacity, and improved body definition. Although Rolfers do not attempt to cure a particular physical problem, many people claim relief is obtained from chronic back conditions as well as from neck, shoulder, and joint pain. Patients with related problems due to motor vehicle accidents can also be helped. Rolfing can ease symptoms of chronic stress, and has been helpful in relieving headaches, menstrual disorders, asthma, digestive problems, and constipation. Many patients claim that besides feeling physically more strong, supple, and energetic, they also feel more confident and positive.

Key Terms

Adhesions

Bands of connective tissue that form abnormally, sometimes into small, rounded particles.

Atrophy

A progressive wasting and loss of function of any part of the body.

Chronic

A disease or condition that progresses slowly but persists over a long period of time.

Fascia

The sheet of connective tissue that covers the body under the skin and envelops the muscles and various organs.

Inflammatory

Any tissue marked by irritation, infection, or injury.

Massage

A method of rubbing, kneading, stroking, or tapping the body.

Pliable

Something that is flexible and able to bend like plastic.

Trauma

Injury or damage to the body.
