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Foot Massage Effective in Improving Sleep Quality and Anxiety in Postmenopausal Women

New study confirms value of foot massage in helping postmenopausal women sleep longer and decrease anxiety and fatigue

CLEVELAND, Ohio (Sept 21, 2022)—The therapeutic benefits of massage have long been recognized. A new study suggests that foot massage, in particular, can help minimize a number of common menopause symptoms, including sleep disruption, effectively extending sleep duration by an average of an hour per day. Study results are published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS).

During the menopause transition, estrogen deficiency can lead to a number of physical and mental health problems, including insomnia, hot flashes, vaginal dryness, headaches and anxiety. Although hot flashes and negative moods commonly seen in the menopause transition often improve, conditions such as sleep complaints and vaginal dryness tend to persist or worsen over time.

Fatigue commonly occurs as a result of hot flashes and impaired sleep quality. In fact, fatigue often ranks as one of the top three menopause complaints and is prevalent in more than a third of women older than 45 years. Although hormone therapy is recognized as an effective treatment option for many menopausal symptoms, including hot flashes, not all women are able or willing to take hormones. Thus, there is a need to identify other approaches, including complementary and alternative treatments, to relieve the various physical and mental health symptoms that often accompany the menopause transition.

Reflexology, which is a specific type of massage therapy, has been shown to help improve relaxation. Foot massage, in particular, reportedly helps individuals relax, reduce stress and restore the body's balance by stimulating the nerve cells located in the legs. Previous studies have suggested that foot reflexology is an effective intervention in reducing stress and fatigue in premenopausal women. However, no previous studies were found that evaluated the effects of foot massage on anxiety, fatigue and sleep at the same time in postmenopausal women.

In this new, small-scale study, researchers specifically sought to evaluate the effects of foot massage on anxiety, fatigue and sleep in postmenopausal women. Study results determined that foot massage applied during menopause increases the average daily sleep duration—as much as an hour per day—and reduces women's fatigue and anxiety levels.

Study results are published in the article “The impact of foot massage given to postmenopausal women on anxiety, fatigue, and sleep: a randomized-controlled trial.”

“Sleep disturbances, fatigue and anxiety symptoms are common during menopause. This small study in Turkish women shows how a simple, inexpensive intervention such as foot massage can improve these

bothersome symptoms in postmenopausal women. Although additional study is needed to confirm these findings in other populations of postmenopausal women, there is little downside to recommending foot massage as a non-hormonal option to help relieve symptoms,” says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director.

For more information about menopause and healthy aging, visit www.menopause.org.

Founded in 1989, The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) is North America’s leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and quality of life of all women during midlife and beyond through an understanding of menopause and healthy aging. Its multidisciplinary membership of 2,000 leaders in the field—including clinical and basic science experts from medicine, nursing, sociology, psychology, nutrition, anthropology, epidemiology, pharmacy, and education—makes NAMS uniquely qualified to serve as the definitive resource for health professionals and the public for accurate, unbiased information about menopause and healthy aging. To learn more about NAMS, visit www.menopause.org.