

show of hands

Can hand reflexology really heal you? Diana Ong gets the lowdown, plus some quick tips to try yourself.

Like foot reflexology, hand reflexology is based on the principle that the application of pressure on reflex points can help to diagnose and treat physical ailments, plus improve overall health and well-being. "The theory is that there are reflexes in the feet and hands that correspond to all parts of the body, including glands and organs," says chiropractor Dr Kevin Lau.

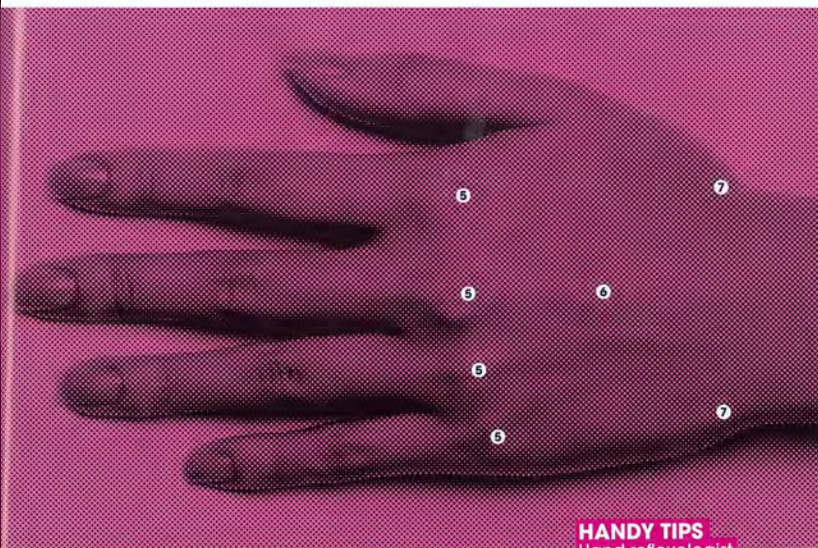
Hand reflexology has been around for as long as foot reflexology, but was less well-known until recently. A spokesperson from True Spa says this is partly because it's not widely available. Many customers also opt for foot reflexology as they tend to feel aches in the feet, which support their full body weight.

However, as the number of daily activities that involve the extensive use of our hands (like text-messaging and typing) increase, women want more treatments to relieve the stress on

their digits. More spas and practitioners are starting to address this. True Spa has been offering the Invigorating Hand Reflexology treatment since last August, and My Happy Feet, which opened last October, has a Hand & Arm Recovery session, where therapists focus on reflex points to relieve tension.

HAND VS FOOT

According to hand reflexologist Kelvin Lim, hand reflexology is preferable to foot reflexology in some ways. Firstly, the hand has a larger anatomical representation in the sensory cortex of the brain than the foot – which means it's more sensitive to sensation, and allows a hand reflexologist to tell if you are at a pre-disease stage. "A single cell can take up to 10 years to go amok, but many conditions will show up in your hands before they show up in



HANDY TIPS

Hand reflexologist Kelvin Lim indicates the points to press for those times when you're too busy to visit a professional.

- 1 If you suffer from indigestion or constipation, massage your palm in a clockwise direction.
- 2 For menstrual cramps, massage the area on the palm below your middle finger in a clockwise direction.
- 3 For a quick pick-me-up on tired days, dig a nail into the middle of your finger tips.
- 4 To improve insomnia, press down on the sides of your middle finger's top section.
- 5 To ease a headache, gently massage the knobs on the back of your hand.
- 6 If you have backache, use your thumb to press the back of your hand under your middle finger in a downward direction.
- 7 Getting a shoulder ache from lolling that 'it bag' around? Rub these sections on the back of your hand.

your body," says Lim, adding that blood clots can manifest on hands as the formation of keratin on the nails, for example. Hand reflexology may also be more accurate as the skin on the feet is coarser, which makes certain reflex points harder to locate. Hand reflexologists do not just scrutinise and feel your palm to diagnose your problems. They also look at spots on your hand, nails, the shape of your fingers and even the temperature variations at different sections of your hand.

TRIED AND TESTED

I made an appointment with Lim, who holds hand reflexology workshops. At our first handshake, he informs me that I have a bad back, based on the observation that back of my hand feels cooler than my palm. I wave this off as a lucky guess – most women suffer from backache thanks to a love for high heels.

Other observations keep my scepticism in check, however. The fact that my middle finger is slightly bent may point to hereditary heart problems. (I do suffer from heart palpitations on occasion.) Lim also accurately diagnoses that I have digestive problems and, at the time of my consultation, am suffering from menstrual cramps, as a specific part of my palm appears swollen. After pressing on my palm further, he advises me to see a gynaecologist. It turns out the advice is timely: When I visit my gynae a week later, I find out that I do have a medical condition. The early diagnosis means it is not serious.

I am now less sceptical of hand reflexology – you may be able

to discover health ailments early and treat them in time. But sessions with Lim do not come cheap: A series of consultations can set you back by a four-figure sum. If you are ill, pregnant or have wounds on your hands, it's advisable to avoid such treatments, adds Dr Lau. Always consult a medical practitioner when in doubt.

For more information on Kelvin Lim's workshops, call 9108-4068 or 9752-2322. Or try the Invigorating Hand Reflexology treatment (\$88 for 30 min) at True Spa, 29 Capping Road, tel: 6235-9555. The Hand & Arm Recovery session (\$30 for 30 min) is at My Happy Feet, 29C Lorong Lipat, tel: 6462-0525.