

Health Benefits of Bowen Therapy

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Before a Bowen Session

The ideal time for a Bowen session is immediately after an injury. That way, your body can overcome the trauma before it begins to compensate for it. (The compensations often create more problems in the long run than the initial trauma itself). If you can't get to a Bowen practitioner immediately, the sooner you can the better. Within three days is ideal for the quickest and most complete recovery.

Many people don't find out about Bowen until weeks, months, or even years of trying other approaches or "learning to live with it." If that's the case with you, you'll get the best results from Bowen if you:

- Don't have any other forms of bodywork for four days beforehand.
- Avoid heavy exercise on the day of your session.
- Don't use ice or heat on the site of injury.
- Wear or bring light-weight, loose-fitting clothing that your practitioner can work through (Or be prepared to be worked on in your underclothes, under sheets or blankets for modesty and comfort).

During a Bowen Treatment

Your practitioner will ask you about your health history and reason for the visit so as to find out if there are any moves or procedures that are contraindicated for you, the best procedures to apply, how much of the work your body is likely to be able to assimilate without overloading you. The hands-on work usually lasts between 15 and 45 minutes.

The pressure used by the practitioner is almost always less than you would expect. On occasion, you might feel a momentary twinge. Be sure to tell your practitioner if you are uncomfortable at any time.

Application of the technique involves stimulation of precise points on the body, in groups of 2 – 8 points at a time. Your practitioner will pause between groups of moves, to allow your body time to assimilate the work. Points generally progress from the torso/core of the body outward.

In most first sessions, the points used are on the back, buttocks, hamstrings, shoulder, neck, and knees. Additional points may be added in areas where you have symptoms and/or elsewhere throughout the body.

The most common reaction to Bowen is a deep sense of overall relaxation and lessening of muscular tension and pain. These result from the body's balancing and improved flow of internal energy. The restorative process begins once the body is relaxed. It is common for people to fall asleep during a session.

After Your Treatment

Each person's response to the Bowen continues for several hours or days, as his or her individual body allows. The benefits will be enhanced by following simple guidelines given by the practitioner. The most common include:

- Not overdoing things for the rest of that day, with regard to exercise or exertion
- When getting out of a bed or chair or car, having the weight transfer equally onto both feet
- Increasing the intake of pure water, to encourage the body's ability to eliminate toxins released by the muscles and connective tissue during and after the Bowen session
- Not remaining seated for longer than half an hour at a time (in the case of lower back pain and other conditions related to lower back imbalance)
- Not overworking the jaw after jaw imbalance is addressed

How Many Sessions?

This varies greatly from person to person. Many conditions are effectively — and lastingly — changed in fewer than 3 – 5 sessions. Musculo-skeletal symptoms generally change the fastest, neurological symptoms the slowest. Some chronic or organic conditions may require ongoing maintenance sessions. Many people choose to have monthly or quarterly maintenance sessions (“tune-ups”) once their initial complaints are addressed.

Reaction to Detoxification

Bowen encourages proper functioning of all body systems, including those responsible for eliminating toxins. If your body has stored unnecessary materials, you may experience one or of these detoxification sensations for a day or after a Bowen session:

Occasionally people feel detoxification reactions, which can include sensations of:

- Aching muscles
- Mild nausea
- Mild headache
- Changes in sensation of temperature
- Minor changes in elimination

Your body will function more effectively when the toxins have been released. During the detoxification, the best way to minimize discomfort is stimulate the lymphatic system to increase the elimination of toxins. You can do this by:

Increasing your water intake, and taking distilled water (for a few days only)
Walking 30 minutes each day in fresh air



HOW DOES BOWEN WORK?

The Bowen Technique helps the body remember how to heal itself. The gentle yet powerful Bowen moves send neurological impulses to the brain resulting in immediate responses of muscle relaxation and pain reduction. The moves create energy surges. Electrical impulses sent to the nervous system remind the body to regain normal movement in joints, muscles and tendons. This helps relieve muscle spasms and increase blood and lymph flow.

The Bowen Technique affects the body primarily through the nervous and the bioenergetic systems, to bring it into a state of balance.

Autonomic Nervous System Rebalancing

The autonomic nervous system controls over 80% of bodily functions (cardiac, respiratory, peripheral circulation, reproductive, endocrine, gastrointestinal) and is very susceptible to stress and emotional tensions. For healing to happen, the body needs to shift from sympathetic (fight/ flight mode) to parasympathetic (vegetative mode) dominance. For this to happen, it needs time and space to literally unwind and “digest” physical and emotional stress. The Bowen Technique facilitates these positive shifts.

Stretch Reflex

Most Bowen moves are done either at the origin, insertion or belly of muscles, where the Golgi and Spindle nerve receptors are located. These receptors inform the nervous system of the state of tension, length or stretch in the muscles and tendons and are stimulated during the rolling part of the Bowen therapy movement.

Joint Proprioceptors

All Bowen moves done around a joint directly affect the joint and ligaments, which are richly innervated with proprioceptors, those nerves that sense the position of your body.

Lymphatic Circulation

The Bowen Technique stimulates lymphatic circulation and drainage.

Spinal Reflexes

Many of the Bowen moves are performed along the spine over the erector muscles (two thick columns of heavy muscles on either side of the spinal column which run from the base of the pelvis to almost the full length of the spine). These moves appear to produce referred reactions to other areas of the body. Often people will mention that conditions were addressed, other than the one for which they originally sought consultation, – even though the practitioner didn't know about them (e.g., improved digestion, elimination circulation or sleep).

Fascia

The fascia, (sheets of connective tissue) connect everything in the body: muscles, bones, internal organs and central nervous system. They play a major role in muscle coordination, flexibility, postural alignment and overall structural and functional integrity. Bowen moves free the relationship between the fascia and the nerve, muscle or tendon being addressed.

Acupuncture Points and Meridians

The Bowen Technique stimulates circulation of energy and clears energetic blocks. Coincidentally, several of the moves are located along acupuncture meridians or on specific acupuncture points which are known to stimulate and balance the body's energy.

WHAT BOWEN IS NOT

Until someone has actually experienced a Bowen session, it's hard to imagine exactly what Bowen is. Although it is difficult to explain Bowen without comparing it to some of the more widely known techniques, we need to be sure to distinguish Bowen as its very own technique.

Some of the other techniques listed here may also be very helpful to a person's condition, and we are not in any way discouraging your use of these treatments, although most of them are contra-indicated while a patient is receiving Bowen treatments.

Massage

Bowen is not Massage. Those newly introduced to Bowen often associate it to massage. However its operation and objectives are quite different. Furthermore, rubbing or even prolonged touching around a Bowen "move" just applied can weaken the effectiveness of the move. Bowen moves go no deeper than fascia on superficially accessible muscles, and only do so with gentle pressure.

Acupressure

Bowen is not Acupressure. Some of the areas of focus in a Bowen treatment will coincide with acupuncture points, but there are so many acu-points some overlap is inevitable. With Bowen "points," though, a more focused intervention is complemented with a more economical application. In the Bowen Technique, one simple move across the structure is all it takes.

Chiropractic

Bowen is not Chiropractic. No manipulation of the skeletal system is made. Most practitioners and many clients observe vertebral movement, but this is evidence of the body realigning itself and a Bowen treatment working. Chiropractic adjustments following a Bowen treatment are counter-indicated.

Directional Energy Work

Bowen is not Directional "Energy Work." Given its parameters, even energy work can be intrusive. Practitioners can focus too much on accomplishing their own desired results, which may or may not coincide with the client's needs. Instead, Bowen practitioners are taught to focus only on doing a precise movement accurately, and then physically leaving the room.

Physiotherapy

Bowen is not Physiotherapy or Neuromuscular “Re-Education.” Stretch reflex, Golgi reflex and reciprocal enervation may be involved in the muscular releases, but these occur on a cellular level and expand out physically. In fact, people may fall asleep during a session, and many will not feel the effects for several days. These factors distinguish the Bowen Technique from remedial exercises or movement training that some people need for long-term injury recovery.

Trigger-Point Therapy

Bowen is not Trigger-Point Therapy. Some points are unavoidably similar even though the referral zones are different. Most trigger points are found in the core of muscles, while Bowen muscle moves are usually made where two muscles or muscle groups overlap. This and other factors seem to make Bowen most similar to fascia work but...

Fascial Release

Bowen is not Fascial Release. With each Bowen move, the fascia is rocked and minutely “disturbed”; it is not forcefully separated. After a series of Bowen sessions, adhesions tend to loosen and scar tissue frequently softens and shrinks on its own because impediments to the natural healing process are removed.

Lymphatic Massage

Bowen is not Lymphatic Massage. Bowen does stimulate lymphatic releases, in that sinuses will often drain during the session; breast lumps may shrink or be gone within a few weeks; and excess fluids are usually eliminated within the week. Bowen does not, however, use the percussion or vigorous stroking of lymphatic massage, although there is a bit of gentle “milking” done around the sternocleidomastoid (SCM) muscle.

Emotional Release

Bowen is not an Emotional Release Modality. The intent of a Bowen session is not to effect emotional releases. However, some people report the dramatic lightening of spirit and a subtle but pervasive refocusing of troublesome emotional patterns. Many bodyworkers consciously focus on the interface between physical and emotional, trying to touch on that which is hidden behind a protective wall of hypertensive musculature. Excessive pressure is not needed; Bowen Therapy confirms that the best access is gained by the least threatening approach.