

Oriental Healing - Feet

THE long road to health begins with a vital single step: massaging the soles of your feet.

The ancient oriental art of reflexology is gaining new respect now that scientists have discovered that nerve endings in the feet are the key to rubbing out painful migraine headaches and other illnesses.

"It's especially good for chronic pain," says Dwight Byers, president of the International Institute of Reflexology in St Petersburg, USA.

It is a powerful weapon against headaches, back pain, stiff necks, constipation, sinus trouble and even kidney stones. Foot massage also reduces stress, improves circulation, cleans and detoxifies the body and boosts your energy levels and brain power.

The incredible technique - similar to acupuncture - involves applying a steady and gentle pressure to different parts of the soles of the feet. During a reflexology session a client lies face-up while the therapist works on the feet for 30 to 60 minutes.

"This unblocks life energy which the Chinese call Qi," says Byers, "The force flows through invisible channels called meridians."

It works like a charm because the feet contain a miniature map of all the organs in the body, say experts. There are pressure points for the heart, lungs, kidneys, stomach and other areas. Stimulating those points clears blockages in the meridians, says Byers, and restores proper energy flow and balance. It sends healing energy up the spinal cord, which then distributes it throughout the body wherever it's needed. New evidence also shows that reflexology releases endorphins - a natural, powerful pain-killer.

"Reflexology can also relieve menstrual discomfort and weight problems," says the author of *Feet First*, Laura Norman.

Let your fingers do the walking.

IT'S easy to put yourself back in the pink, by using reflexology.

Look at the illustration to find the point you want to work on. Then learn the Thumb-Walk- the most common reflexology finger technique. Apply steady pressure to the sole of the foot with the thumb. Then walk it forward by bending and unbending the joint. Go slowly so you don't miss any of the reflexology points.

To relieve stress, try a full foot massage. Start by applying steady pressure just below the ball of the foot. Next, move the pressure slowly up to the little toes, then thumb-walk across to the big toe. Massage your arch and your heel, and thumb-walk to the outer edge of your foot. Thumb-walk across the base of your toes and down the ball of your foot again. Finish by gently massaging the top of the foot, including gentle strokes up the ankle and lower calf.

The following illustration shows points on the soles of the feet that you should massage to relieve problems in particular parts of the body. (see next page)

