

# Walk On

Ashiatsu, the newest craze in massage therapy, just walked onto the Chicago scene...literally.

**IT'S NORMALLY A BAD IDEA** to let someone walk all over you; but in the case of Ashiatsu massage, you really should just lie down and enjoy.

Ashiatsu is performed on a client's back with the therapist using her feet instead of her hands. Holding onto a bar above her head for balance, the therapist uses her body weight to vary and control the pressure. Unlike most massages, this treatment isn't your typical form of relaxation; it's extremely intense and perfect for anyone in need of some serious deep tissue work.

"Our therapists have been taught specific foot positions that simulate the hand," says Peter Rubnitz, owner and manager of Urban Oasis, a massage spa that brought Ashiatsu to Chicago a few months ago and is now the only facility in the city to perform the treatment. "So they're able to use their feet to grab into certain areas of the body and the muscle, just like they can with their hands—except with better pressure."

While Ashiatsu is new to Chicago, it's actually a centuries old technique with roots in the Far East. It was brought to the States in 1999 by massage therapist Ruthie Hardee, who had seen it done as a young girl in Thailand and



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the Philippines. Putting a Western spin on the traditional Asian technique, Hardee's take on Ashiatsu has gained huge popularity in the past few years on the East and West Coasts.

Many clients attribute the massage with improving their posture, relieving pain and stress, and treating spinal problems. Now massage lovers in Chicago will get to feel the effects of Ashiatsu firsthand...or foot.

"The foot can address a broader area than a hand or elbow," explains Urban Oasis mas-

sage therapist Nikki Pinchott. "When people are really stiff—particularly in the glutes or hip area—it can be very painful to have the hand or elbow used. But the foot spreads the pressure so it's not as painful."

Still have your doubts about someone walking on you? Be assured that the therapists thoroughly sanitize their feet before each session. Plus, each of Urban Oasis' Ashiatsu-trained therapists have great upper body strength, which means that they can easily hold themselves up on the bar and they'll never put their full body weight on a client—they'll only use the amount that's needed. Still, due to the intensity of the treatment, this is not the type of massage that most women will want on a regular basis.

"It's a very unique and exotic treatment," Peter notes. "People are always looking for something new and different; and for those who enjoy massages, this is it."

Ashiatsu massages are \$110 for a 70-minute session; 50 minutes are dedicated to Ashiatsu, with the remaining 20 focused on the more traditional technique (i.e. the therapist uses her hands). To schedule a session, call Urban Oasis at 312.640.0001. ■ **By Ashley Hamilton**

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