

MASSAGE

What is massage?

Massage is the manipulation of muscles to improve healing, health and wellness and relax the mind and body. The term “massage therapy” encompasses many different techniques. A certified massage therapist uses different stroking and pressure techniques to help relax muscles and relieve painful, tense areas in the limbs, neck and back.

What are the health benefits of massage?

People use massage for a variety of health-related purposes, including relieving pain, rehabilitating sports injuries, reducing stress, increasing relaxation, addressing anxiety and depression, and aiding general wellness. Although only limited research has been conducted on massage therapy, there is evidence that massage may benefit some patients. Conclusions generally cannot yet be drawn about its effectiveness for specific health conditions.



What are the risks?

Massage therapy appears to have few serious risks if it is performed by a properly trained therapist and if appropriate cautions are followed. Very few serious injuries are reported. Side effects of massage therapy may include temporary pain or discomfort, bruising, swelling, and a sensitivity or allergy to massage oils.

If you have a medical condition and are unsure whether massage therapy would be appropriate for you, discuss your concerns with your health care provider. Your health care provider may also be able to help you select a massage therapist.



Who practices massage?

Massage therapists work in a variety of settings, including private offices, hospitals, nursing homes, studios, and sport and fitness facilities. Some also travel to patients' homes or workplaces. They usually try to provide a calm, soothing environment.

What should I expect during a massage session?

Therapists usually ask new patients about symptoms, medical history, and desired results. They may also perform an evaluation through touch, to locate painful or tense areas and determine how much pressure to apply.

Typically, the patient lies on a table, either in loose-fitting clothing or undressed (covered with a sheet, except for the area being massaged). The therapist may use oil or lotion on the skin. Sometimes, people receive massage therapy while sitting in a chair. A massage session may be fairly brief, but may also last an hour or even longer.

Adapted from:

<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/massage/massageintroduction.htm>