



TANYA I. EDWARDS, MD, CENTER
FOR INTEGRATIVE AND LIFESTYLE MEDICINE

Massage Therapy

What is massage therapy?

Massage therapy is the use of massage techniques to treat disorders of the human body, promote healing, improve clinical outcomes and encourage higher levels of wellness. Professionally trained massage therapists use touch to manipulate the tissues of the body in a skilled, sensitive and compassionate way. Some patients enjoy massage therapy as a regular part of maintaining wellness while others use it as a temporary treatment for specific injuries or conditions.

What does massage therapy feel like?

More than 80 types of massage therapy exist. With such a vast variety of techniques and possible combinations, the way you'll feel during treatment can be hard to predict. Some techniques use less pressure than the weight of a hand, while others press intensely into certain points to release muscle tension. Before treatment, discuss with your therapist which technique or techniques will be used and what they should feel like. During the course of treatment, it's OK to talk to your therapist about

what you feel and your comfort level. Some patients describe sensations that are painful in a good way, but if you experience any pain that causes you discomfort, please tell your therapist right away.

What happens during a session of massage therapy?

A massage therapy session usually lasts about 50 minutes. The lighting in the room is low and subtle to help create a sense of relaxation before the massage even begins. Gentle, soothing music plays in the background throughout the massage.

What are the benefits of massage therapy?

Most patients feel more relaxed, especially if they have massage therapy sessions regularly. Research shows that massage therapy can help reduce pain, decrease autoimmune

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illnesses and enhance immune function. Specifically, massage therapy can:

- Increase range of motion and flexibility
- Increase blood and lymph function
- Help people respond to and better tolerate medical procedures and other related therapies
- Reduce pain, depression, stress and anxiety related to illness
- Reduce muscle tension or soreness, and help restore muscle tone lost through long-term bed rest, stress and anxiety

What diseases or ailments can massage therapy help treat?

Massage therapists use different techniques to address a variety of ailments, diseases and injuries. Some techniques help treat physical problems resulting from stress or emotional conditions. Others address physical problems such as injuries resulting from a car accident. Specific techniques can help treat some diseases. For example:

- Respiratory disorders (such as sinus pressure) can be relieved through trigger point release
- Congestive chest symptoms can be relieved through tapotement, a percussion type of massage
- Neurological and muscular disorders (such as headaches, migraines, neck pain, tennis elbow, low back pain, frozen shoulder, and pain associated with osteoarthritis, tendonitis or menstrual symptoms) can be addressed through cranio-sacral release, Swedish massage, myofascial release and a variety of other techniques
- Digestive disorders (such as constipation) can be relieved through abdominal techniques
- Post-operative pain and lymphedema can be addressed with lymphatic drainage



Is massage therapy right for everyone?

Some people with preexisting medical conditions may not benefit from massage therapy. If you have any of the following issues, please discuss them with your therapist and physician before treatment:

- Any condition for which you are taking blood-thinning medication (which may contribute to bruising)
- Blood clots in the leg
- Tumors
- Osteoporosis or disease of the spine (which may make you vulnerable to fractures)
- Weak skin
- Medical devices implanted or attached to your body

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To schedule an appointment for massage therapy or other forms of integrative medicine, contact the Tanya I. Edwards, MD, Center for Integrative and Lifestyle Medicine at [**216.448.HEAL\(4325\)**](tel:216.448.HEAL(4325)).