

Massage Therapy

What is massage therapy

There are over 80 types of massage therapy and in all of them, therapists press, rub, and otherwise manipulate the muscles and other soft tissues of the body, often varying pressure and movement.

Practitioners mostly use their hands and fingers, but may use their forearms, elbows, or feet. Typically, the intent is to relax the soft tissues, increase delivery of blood and oxygen to the massaged areas, warm them, and decrease pain.

A massage therapy session

In a typical massage therapy session, the practitioner will discuss symptoms, medical history, the desired results, and possibly other factors such as work and levels of stress. The practitioner will likely perform some evaluations through touch and if they don't find anything that would make a massage inadvisable, they will proceed with the massage.

Oil or powder helps reduce friction on the skin and the therapist may use other aids, such as ice, heat, fragrances, or machines. The practitioner may also provide recommendations for self-care, such as drinking fluids, learning better movement, and developing an awareness of the body.

How massage therapy may help

Massage may be used for a number of health complaints, for example it may relieve pain, rehabilitate sports injuries, reduce stress, increase relaxation, address feelings of anxiety and depression, and aid general wellness.

Choosing a practitioner

It is important to choose a qualified practitioner who has undertaken all the necessary training to understand the theory and practice of massage therapy.

The Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (CNHC), which is supported by the Department of Health, can help when choosing a practitioner that meets the national standards of practice in massage therapy: it has established a voluntary register for complementary healthcare practitioners who all meet the required levels of competence and practice.

Further information and registered practitioners can be found on the CNHC website www.cnhc.org.uk