# Massage Therapy

Massage therapy dates back thousands of years and is referenced in ancient writing from China, Japan, India and Egypt.  Massage therapists work on muscle and other soft tissue to help one feel better.  The term "massage therapy" includes many techniques and the type of massage given usually depends on the needs and physical condition of the person seeking the massage.

## Types of Massages:

- Swedish massage: The therapist uses long strokes, kneading, deep circular movements, vibration, and tapping; used to relax and energize.
- Deep Tissue massage: Similar to Swedish massage, but the deeper pressure is beneficial in releasing chronic muscle tension.  The focus is on the deepest layers of muscle tissue, tendons, and fascia (protective layer around surrounding muscles, bones and joints) and can help heal muscle damage from an injury.
- Sports massage:  Combines techniques of Swedish massage and deep tissue massage; used to help prevent athletic injury, keep the body flexible and help in recovery.
- Chair massage:  Massage of the upper body, while fully clothed and seated in a special portable chair.
- Neuromuscular Therapy massage:  Addresses trigger points, circulation, nerve compression, postural issues and biomechanical problems that can be caused by repetitive movement injuries.
- Shiatsu massage:  Shiatsu means "finger pressure".  Varied, rhythmic pressure on certain precise points of the body, called acupressure points, believed to be important for the flow of the body's vital energy, called chi.
- Hot Stone massage: Warm stones are placed on certain areas of the body, such as acupressure points.  The stones may be used as massage tools or be temporarily left in place which can be quite soothing and relaxing as they transmit heat deep into the body.
- Reflexology:  Uses hand, thumb, and finger techniques to stimulate certain areas of the feet believed to correspond to different parts of the body.  The massage, then, is expected to promote health and well-being.

Massage therapy has many health benefits:

- Relief of back pain - More than one study has shown the effectiveness of massage therapy for back pain. In fact, one 2003 study showed it worked better than acupuncture or spinal modification for persistent low back pain -- reducing the need for painkillers by 36%.
- Relief of headaches – Massage therapy can reduce the number of migraines a person has and also improve sleep.
- Relief of Osteoarthritis pain – Massage therapy improves pain, stiffness and function of joints.
- Cancer – When used as a complement to traditional, Western medicine, massage can promote relaxation and reduce cancer symptoms or side effects from treatment. It may help reduce pain, swelling, fatigue, nausea, or depression and improve the function of the immune system.
- Anxiety - A review of more than 12 studies shows that massage helps relieve depression and anxiety. It lowered levels of cortisol by up to 50%. And massage increased levels of neurotransmitters that help reduce depression. A study in the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine found that people's blood pressure fell after a single 45 to 60 minute deep tissue massage. Additionally, a 2010 meta-analysis in the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry found that massage modalities like deep tissue reduce stress hormone levels and heart rate while boosting mood and relaxation by triggering the release of oxytocin and serotonin.

So, the bottom line is, whether you are the athletic type that has sore muscles and joints from being overactive; you have a chronic illness that causes pain and/or inflammation; you have depression or anxiety disorder; or you want to take a preventative approach to your overall health and well-being, there is a type of massage therapy that will benefit you. Relax & Enjoy!

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