

How long is a session?

An hour is a common session length. This gives time for a deeply relaxing full body massage, or more in-depth work on a particular area, for example, back, neck and shoulders. A half-hour can be an excellent introduction to bodywork, with plenty of time for a specific area such as back, neck and shoulders or legs and feet. An hour and a half is usually enough time to address the whole body, with special attention to a problem area. However, two hours is also offered.

What should I expect afterwards?

Massage and bodywork can be profoundly relaxing, affecting all your body's systems. Give yourself a moment to reorient before slowly getting up.

After a session, most people feel very relaxed. Many experience freedom from aches and pains that have built up over months of tension or repetitive activity. After an initial period of feeling slowed down, people often experience an increase in energy that can last for several days.

Sometimes you may not feel dramatic results right away. Watch for changes over the following days, such as pain relief, increased mobility, or reduced stress.

From assembly lines to corporate headquarters, Americans are discovering the magic of massage. At Boeing and Reebok, headaches, back strain and fatigue have all fallen since the companies started bringing massage therapists. Ballerina Julie Kent of American Ballet Theatre of New York calls her weekly sessions "as essential as stage makeup or Pointe shoes." Doctors have started prescribing massage to help patients manage stress and pain. And a few HMOs have begun sharing in the cost.
— Newsweek, April 6, 1998

How do I find out more?

You may still have questions, and you are right to be careful. Any massage therapist will be happy to discuss your questions over the phone or in person before you book an appointment. But in the end, the best answers will come from experiencing massage or bodywork first hand. Enjoy in good health!

Proponents of integrative medicine are creating clinics at which a physician evaluates a patient, makes a medical diagnosis, and then recommends a combination of therapies that may include pharmaceuticals, herbs, acupuncture, or even a massage.

— Journal of the American Medical Association, Resident Forum, November 11, 1998

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What is a Massage Like?



Your
First
Appointment

Massage and related bodywork techniques can release painful muscle tension, improve circulation, increase joint flexibility, and reduce mental and physical fatigue. In addition, massage is among the most effective means available to combat stress. But the question most people want answered before first trying this healthful and enjoyable experience is, “What will it actually be like?”

What are some types of massage?

There are too many to list in a short brochure! Swedish massage is what many people think of when massage is mentioned. It uses long flowing strokes, deep kneading, surface friction, light tapping, and joint movement.

Many therapists are trained in specialized types of bodywork which they may use exclusively or in some combination. For example, there are special techniques to relieve painful trigger points, relax contracted fascia (the muscles’ protective covering), realign and heal injured tissue, and lymph drainage, or restore the natural balance and flow of energy throughout the body.

What is a massage therapist?

Massage therapists have completed many hours of education which includes a variety of bodywork techniques, extensive anatomy and physiology, and knowledge of when massage is and is not appropriate. A growing number of states and provinces license massage therapists. Ask your therapist to explain his or her unique combination of specialized training.

The idea that touch can heal is an old one . . . But in recent years massage has regained respectability and now enjoys unprecedented popularity . . . And science is confirming what we knew in our hearts — that as psychiatrist James Gordon puts it, “massage is medicine.”

— Reader’s Digest, February 1998

What is the first appointment like?

Your massage therapist will begin by asking you general health questions since there are some conditions for which massage is not appropriate.

Depending on the primary technique your therapist uses, you may or may not need to undress. For a full body Swedish massage, most people undress completely, though you may choose to wear underwear. Your massage therapist will give you privacy to undress, and you will be covered except for the area being worked on.

You will relax on a padded table designed for stability and comfort. Your therapist may offer cushions or an adjustable face rest for support. The room will be warm and quiet with soft music to set a relaxing mood.

For many techniques, your massage therapist will use a lubricant, such as light oil or lotion, which is good for your skin and absorbs well. For some kinds of bodywork, no oil or lotion is used.

A massage or bodywork session usually begins with relatively gentle pressure to calm your nervous system and begin releasing superficial tension. Gradually, your therapist works more deeply to address specific areas.

Some new research emerged this past year regarding the healing power of touch. Benefits such as reducing stress hormones and boosting immune responses are placing a new light on massage, an ancient practice enjoyed in cultures around the world . . . [The] public is embracing these new findings, moving massage to the forefront of complementary health care techniques.

— American Fitness, Jan—Feb 1998

What should I do during a massage?

Make yourself comfortable. If your therapist wants you to adjust your position, she or he will either move you (for instance lift your arm) or will tell you what is needed. Otherwise, change your position anytime to make yourself more comfortable.

Many people just close their eyes and relax completely during a session; others prefer to talk. It’s your massage, and whatever feels natural to you is the best way to relax. Do not hesitate to ask questions at any time.

How will a massage feel?

Massage on healthy tissues feels good. The normal response is to slow down, breathe deeply, and relax.

Some people are surprised to find that a massage does not tickle. Your massage therapist uses gentle but firm pressure, gradually preparing you for deeper touch.

The saying “no pain, no gain” is not true for massage and bodywork. The most effective and deepest massage works with the body’s natural responses, not against them. Working in the area of an injury or chronic pain may at first cause some discomfort, which usually lessens in the first few minutes. Your massage therapist knows ways to minimize pain, and will work carefully within what feels right to you. Always tell your therapist if you feel any discomfort so she can adjust.