

Where does the practice of massage therapy come from?

Massage therapy has been a practice for thousands of years in civilizations such as; China, Japan, India, Arabic Nations, Greece, Egypt and Rome. It spread widely across Europe as a practice to ease pain and alleviate anxiety but was not introduced to the United States until the mid- 1800's. As a practice it surged until the late 1930's -1940's where the benefits were often not realized. In the 1970's, growing popularity among professional athletes of massage therapy brought about a revival in the field and today it is widely used for stress reduction, a general well being or prevention tool, pain reduction and relaxation.

What is the practice of massage?

Massage therapy is a practice of manipulating muscle groups and other soft tissues through a series of long strokes and kneading with the hands, forearms, elbows and sometimes feet. This traditional Swedish practice is most commonly combined with energetic practices such as Polarity, Reiki and Cranial Sacral to allow clients alleviation from chronic pain or stress.

Is there proof that massage works?

More and more studies are beginning to show the true and long term impacts of regular massage therapy sessions to be helpful and beneficial. The NCCAM (National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine) has begun to study in more depth:

- The effects of massage on chronic neck pain and low-back pain
- Massage to treat anxiety disorder, alleviate depression in patients with advanced AIDS, and promote recovery in women who were victims of sexual abuse as children
- Massage to relieve fatigue in cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, reduce treatment-related swelling of the arms in breast cancer patients, and alleviate pain and distress in cancer patients at the end of life.
- Whether massage improves weight gain and immune system function in preterm infants
- Whether massage given at home by a trained family member helps reduce pain from sickle cell anemia.

Research of these and many more topics are allowing the true understanding of the overall benefits of massage therapy to mind and body.

What should I look for in a therapist?

- A practitioner that is actively licensed in the state they practice for massage therapy.
- A practitioner that you feel comfortable with. Don't be afraid to ask them for their license number or for references from other clients they have worked with. Establishing a strong foundation is critical to effective treatment.
- A practitioner should spend a few moments completing an "in-take" evaluation of any ongoing or chronic pain to ensure they understand your treatment needs.
- A practitioner that uses techniques or "modalities" that applies to your needs. If you are unsure of a technique make sure to ask your therapist what the technique consists of and how they apply it to your treatment.

How can I ensure that my therapy will remain effective?

Be sure that you intake only water after receiving treatment to effectively flush toxins out of your system. Understand and budget for ongoing sessions. Massage therapy is most effective when made part of your prevention routine. Plan your budget to allow yourself to see your practitioner at least once every 30-60 days. It takes years to build up the injuries in our body, it should only make sense that they cannot be fully cleared in one session. Remain honest with your practitioner regarding changes in your body or environment that should result in a modification of your treatment.