

Six Massage Questions You're Afraid to Ask

Get the Inside Scoop

Robert Chute

Considering massage but have a few concerns? Get your answers here!

I'M A BIT UNCOMFORTABLE TAKING ALL MY CLOTHES OFF WHEN I GO FOR MASSAGE. DO I HAVE TO BE COMPLETELY NAKED TO RECEIVE MASSAGE?

Some people go under the sheets without a stitch on, others wear underwear, and some people prefer to wear shorts, sweatpants, or even their regular street clothes. No, you don't have to take off more clothes than you are comfortable with to receive massage. Talk to your therapist and he or she will adapt to your needs. Be aware that wearing more clothes can interfere with the use of certain techniques, but there's no reason you can't enjoy receiving

For some, it creates a psychological boundary that allows them to more fully relax during the massage, and that's okay, too. Rest assured, massage therapists work with all kinds of bodies, from the very young to the very old and all shapes and sizes in between. Massage therapists are a very caring and giving group. To be successful at what they do, they have to be. Your therapist strives to strike a balance between engaging with you as the complex individual you are, as well as seeing your body and all its unique qualities from a clinical perspective. Bodywork is about the careful application of techniques to muscles, ligaments, and connective tissue as a means to enhance your whole being; it's not about judgment.



Make sure all of your questions are answered so you can fully relax and enjoy your massage.

massage in casual clothes. Therapists won't be able to use lotion and may be unable to work as deeply, but they can adapt to your comfort level and still deliver a satisfying massage experience.

People who are self-conscious about their bodies might get massage more often, and with less apprehension, if they had the added underwear barrier.

I'D LIKE GET MESSAGES MORE OFTEN, BUT I CAN'T AFFORD IT. DO I TALK TO MY MASSAGE THERAPIST ABOUT THIS?

Yes, talk to your massage therapist. Your practitioner may have a client loyalty or frequent-buyer program in place to bring down the total cost of massage, or a time-pay option to spread out the cost.

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Trees are the earth's endless effort to speak to the listening heaven.

-Tagore

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By appointment

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Many therapists take credit cards, and some will take postdated checks or a series of postdated checks to work out a payment plan. Some therapists have a sliding scale of fees depending on annual income and financial hardship, or they may accept coupons from bartering networks.

If you have some flexibility with your schedule, ask your therapist if she/he does a standby list. Your therapist might consider a discount fee if you can pop in for a last-minute appointment and fill a late cancellation.

You may also want to check with your employer or insurance carrier to see if you might be covered for massage therapy.

If you love massage and communicate to your therapist how much you value it, you might be able to work out an arrangement that's fair to all parties.

I'M NEVER SURE ABOUT GRATUITIES FOR MASSAGE SERVICES. WHAT SHOULD I TIP?

Massage therapists working in spas don't usually receive the full fee charged for their services. They work on a percentage split with the spa owner or receive a salary. If you are visiting a spa, tipping is common (15-20 percent) and therapists may depend on tips for their income, just as restaurant servers do.

Your solo practitioner will likely appreciate tips as well, although not all massage settings accept tips (a doctor's office with a practitioner who offers massage, for example). Bottom line is, if you feel like tipping, offer. If you don't feel tipping is appropriate, don't.

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN I FEEL TICKLISH ON THE MESSAGE TABLE?

Some people are sensitive to particular techniques, which make them feel uncomfortable and want to giggle. If that happens, your therapist may use a broader stroke or deeper pressure so it doesn't tickle. In the unlikely event you're still way too ticklish with those variations, the therapist can skip that part of the body and concentrate on less sensitive areas. It's your massage, so you can dictate what works and what doesn't. Be sure to tell your therapist beforehand about any sensitive or particularly ticklish areas of your body so he or she can accommodate you more effectively.

ISN'T IT TRUE THAT MASSAGE HAS TO HURT TO DO ANY GOOD?

Massage does not have to hurt to help. You can gain therapeutic benefits from a relaxing massage, which doesn't hurt a bit, or you can seek out more aggressive treatment options, which can cause some discomfort. Trigger point therapy and friction are examples of techniques, which are briefly uncomfortable, but very helpful for many conditions. If you don't want heavy pressure, say so. Massage therapists want to help you. If you're wincing under the pressure and tightening up, that will work against the goals of massage, which is to invite your body to relax, reduce pain, increase well-being, and have long, supple muscles. Massage therapists aren't in the torture business. Let your therapist know what feels good and what doesn't. Recognize that your needs and pain threshold might change with each visit.

FROM THE MALE CLIENT: WHAT IF I GET AN ERECTION DURING A MASSAGE?

It rarely occurs, but if it does, don't panic. Sometimes as a result of your nervous system going into relaxation mode (or because of certain medications) erections happen. Therapists know that this is a physiological reaction and will treat the situation accordingly. Usually your therapist will try to redirect your attention with a shift in the focus of his or her work, maybe by altering pressure or moving to a different area of your body. Your unintended erection, and any embarrassment, will soon pass.

Any more unspoken questions for your therapist? Ask. Your honesty will strengthen your therapeutic bond with your caregiver and let you deepen your relaxation time and feeling of healing. And that's what it's all about: You.



A deeply relaxing experience, massage contributes to your overall health and wellness.

Massage Ambiance is Key

Is the Scene Conducive to Your Relaxation?

Nina McIntosh

Ever had a massage but couldn't fully enjoy it because the music was too fast, or the aromatherapy was not to your liking, or outside noise was disruptive? Whatever the issue, feel comfortable knowing that your massage therapist wants you to express your feelings.

The quality of communication between the practitioner and the client is key. By all means, you should speak up about anything that diminishes your enjoyment of, or ability to focus on, your session, no matter whether the problem is the therapist's office or her/his behavior. It's your session, and you have the right to an environment that supports your relaxation.

Having said that, it's not always easy to assert yourself while lying naked on a table. However, your practitioner is a professional and is open to, even seeking, feedback. If you are bothered, others probably are too. Your practitioner wants and needs to know and would much prefer you mentioning it than choosing to not come back again.

And you may learn something as well. Perhaps that lavender oil you thought was too strong actually helps relaxation and will work wonders for you in a more diluted form. Or maybe the exterior noise is a problem only on Monday evenings, and you can be sure to avoid booking your appointment then.

FIXING THE PROBLEM

The situation may be something easy to remedy, like changing the music or essential oils. But if it's something more complex, like exterior noise from officemates, your practitioner may need time to address the situation.

View the situation as an opportunity to provide important, constructive feedback about the services offered as well a chance to enhance the therapeutic relationship between you and your massage practitioner.

Your massage session is about you. Take responsibility for communicating your needs, and your session will be all the more healing for it.



Communicating your needs is key.

Massage for Old Injuries

Ancient Injuries Don't Have to Make You Feel Old

Art Riggs

Injuries such as chronic back pain, trick knees, and sticky shoulders are not necessarily something you just have to live with. Massage techniques might hold the key to unlocking this old pain.

Will Massage Help?

The benefits of massage will depend on the extent of the injury, how long ago it occurred, and on the skill of the therapist. Chronic and old injuries often require deeper and more precise treatments with less emphasis on general relaxation and working on the whole body. Massage works best for soft tissue injuries to muscles and tendons and is most effective in releasing adhesions and lengthening muscles that have shortened due to compensatory reactions to the injury. Tight and fibrous muscles not

only hurt at the muscle or its tendon, but can also interfere with proper joint movement and cause pain far away from the original injury.

Therapists who perform such work often have specialized names for their work--such as orthopedic massage, neuromuscular therapy, myofascial release, medical massage, etc.--but many massage therapists utilize an eclectic approach combining the best of the specialties.

It Works!

A recent Consumer Reports article ran the results of a survey of thousands of its readers and reported that massage was equal to chiropractic care in many areas, including back and neck pain. Massage

also ranked significantly higher than some other forms of treatment, such as physical therapy or drugs.

If that nagging injury persists, consider booking a massage. Be sure to discuss the injury with your practitioner: How did you receive the injury? Have you reinjured it? And what exactly are your symptoms? Often, the body compensates in one area to protect another that has been traumatized, and this can create new problems.

Discuss the issues with your massage therapist. (Sometimes just talking about old injuries can play a significant role in the healing process.) Together, the two of you can work to determine a treatment plan.

*We are what we
repeatedly do.
Excellence, then,
is not an act but
a habit.*

-Aristotle

At Tree of Life Massage & Wellness, my goal is to tailor your massage to your individual needs and preferences while promoting, enhancing, and maintaining your quality of life.

Pain relief is my specialty. I tend to have a firm pressure and use a variety of techniques including accupressure, compression, trigger point release, stretching & range of motion movements. Often, I will give advice on ways to stretch or relax areas of tension at home, so you can get relief in between appointments.

You can expect a thorough medical history & evaluation before your massage in order to provide you with the most therapeutic bodywork. I am also committed to educating my clients and the community about alternative healthcare options.

I offer a variety of ways to make regular massage affordable. New clients can try me out with a \$20 discount off their 1st hour or longer massage. I'd love to show you how my services can improve your quality of life.

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