

Therapeutic Massage for a Healthier Life

Your First Massage

You are joining a growing number of men and women who have found therapeutic massage to be a valuable addition to their fitness routines, and an effective complement to other health care services. Many people seek therapeutic massage as a natural means to promote healthy body functioning, and to enhance the body's own restorative power.

As with any new experience, you probably have many questions about what to expect in your first massage session. The most frequently asked questions are answered here, in hope that your 1st visit will be as comfortable and productive as possible.

Why are you getting a massage?

Your experienced massage therapist will plan the session to address your needs and desires. Let your therapist know in the initial interview what you are looking for, and discuss how his approach can help you.

The most common reasons for getting a massage are:

- General relaxation
- Revitalization
- Relieve sore tight muscles
- Relieve tension headaches
- Recovery from sports activity
- General health and fitness
- Improve circulation
- Complement to other health care

What are your concerns about the session?

It is important that you are comfortable during your massage, and that you know your options. Here are some commonly expressed concerns of newcomers to massage.

Modesty: In a standard massage session, you will be draped with a sheet. You may choose to be totally or partially unclothed under the drape. As each part of the body is being massaged, it is uncovered. Genitals and women's breasts are covered at all times. Many people prefer to wear their underpants during a massage. Feel free to ask about the draping method to be used, and let the massage therapist know what you are comfortable with. Some forms of massage, such as shiatsu and seated massage, may be performed with the client fully clothed.

Talking: Talking during a massage session is optional. Some people prefer silence, especially during a massage for general relaxation, while others like more social interaction. Always feel free to give the therapist feedback on anything causing discomfort. The therapist may request feedback from you, especially when addressing a specific problem.

Oil: Oil, lotion, or other lubricant is commonly used to enable the therapist's hands to slide over the skin without causing chaffing, or pulling hair. Inform the therapist of any allergies you may have which might be aggravated by the lubricant used. You may also inquire about removing the lubricant after the session, if you are concerned that it may stain your clothes.

Make-up and hair: Massage of the face, scalp or neck may result in disturbing your make-up or hairstyle. Let the therapist know if this is a concern. They may modify their technique, be especially careful or skip that area altogether.

Pain: Whether you will feel any pain during a massage depends on many factors, including your physical condition, the reason for the massage, your pain tolerance and the therapist's technique.

Discuss this before the massage, and give feedback to the therapist during the session. Tense muscles are sore, and may hurt a little when massaged. Sometimes there is delayed soreness after a massage. Take a hot shower or bath, and drink plenty of water to help remove waste products flushed out during a massage. This is very important, especially after the first massage. The more massages you receive, the less likely you will experience post-massage soreness.

Length of session: Massage sessions generally last from 1 hour to 1-1/2 hours. The amount of time depends on the purpose of the session, the therapist's schedule, and the availability of your time and resources.

Are there any restrictions?

There are certain situations in which caution should be taken before receiving therapeutic massage. It is generally agreed upon that persons with uncontrolled high blood pressure, heart disease, recent surgery or fractures, phlebitis, fever, and other problems or conditions should consult their doctors for any restrictions on receiving massage. In some cases, limited restrictions apply, and in rare cases, massage should be avoided altogether. If in doubt, consult your doctor.

What health information should I provide?

You may be asked to provide certain information to the massage therapist about your past and current health. This information is used to help plan the massage session, and to insure your safety. Important information includes any major health problems you have, medications you are taking, allergies, state of pregnancy, and recent injuries.

Tiping: It is common practice to tip the massage therapist in places such as health clubs, beauty salons or resorts. It is not accepted practice in a doctor's office

Missed appointments: It is a courtesy to give at least 24 hours notice if you must cancel an appointment. You will be asked to pay for appointments missed without prior notification.

Insurance coverage: Check with your insurance company first, if you are expecting them to cover the cost of therapeutic massage. This varies from company to company, and state to state.

Your Massage Therapist

Michael C. Frost, LMT has had a thriving practice in the Greater Cleveland area for over two decades. He specializes in developing innovative skills in wellness taking the natural approach that works with the body's natural healing abilities. By using both Western and Eastern massage therapy approaches he incorporates an eclectic blend of ancient, indigenous, hands-on techniques with some of the most innovative body work systems today. This is called Integrative Body Work Therapy (IBT).

Some General Advice

Be an active participant in the session. Ask questions about things you don't understand, make your wishes known, and let the therapist know if you are uncomfortable at any time. There will be a written form to fill out. More information, than for a general massage session, may be requested if a specific health problem is being addressed.

Above all, relax and enjoy your massage!