

## Financial Matters

Discuss financial matters before the session to avoid any misunderstandings.

**Payment:** Payment is usually due either immediately before or after the session. Method of payment varies. Be sure to check first if you are expecting to charge the session on a bank card.

**Tipping:** Tipping is customary in certain situations, and not in others. It is common practice to tip the massage therapist in places such as health clubs, beauty salons, or resorts. It may not be 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. Some places require longer notice. You may be asked to pay for appointments missed without notice.

**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.

## How Do You Choose A Massage Therapist?

Which massage therapist is right for you depends on many factors. Some common considerations are approach or style, qualifications, and gender.

**Qualifications:** Training and experience of therapists vary. Some states and municipalities require licensing of massage therapists. Check your therapist's credentials, especially if you are seeking massage for problem conditions.

**Gender:** The gender of your massage therapist is mainly a matter of personal preference. Cross gender massage is common today. Your massage therapist should be someone you feel comfortable with and with whom you can relax.

**Approach or Style:** Many massage therapists use an eclectic approach to their work, combining several different massage styles. The two most common general styles are traditional Swedish massage, and Oriental bodywork styles such as shiatsu and acupressure. Some massage therapy approaches

have specific applications. Talk to your massage therapist to find out if his/her style is suitable for the goals you have set for your massage session.

## 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. Above all, relax and enjoy your massage!

*Your First Therapeutic Massage* written by Patricia J. Benjamin, PhD.



HEMINGWAY  
PUBLICATIONS

1702 Windsor Rd. #2413, Loves Park, IL 61132-7002

[www.hemingwaypublications.com](http://www.hemingwaypublications.com)

815-624-8580

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# Your First MASSAGE

*Concerns about the session*



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 health and 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 powers.

As with any new experience, you probably have many questions about what to expect in your first massage session. This brochure is designed to answer some of the most frequently asked questions from newcomers to therapeutic massage, and make your first visit as comfortable and productive as possible.



## Why Are You Getting a Massage?

One of the first things your massage therapist will want to know is why you are getting a massage. An experienced massage therapist will plan the session to address your needs and desires. The most common reasons are:

- General Relaxation
- Revitalization
- Relieve Sore or Tight Muscles
- Relieve Tension Headaches
- Recovery from Sports Activity
- General Health and Fitness
- Improve Circulation
- Complement to Other Health Care

Let your therapist know in the initial interview what you are looking for, and discuss how his/her approach can help you.

## 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 problem conditions should consult their doctors for any restrictions, before receiving massage. In some cases, limited restrictions apply, and in rare cases, massage should be avoided altogether. If in doubt, consult your doctor.

## What Are Your Concerns About the Session?

Discuss with the massage therapist any concerns you have about the upcoming session. It is important that you are comfortable during the 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 or large towel. 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 should be 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 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 have

## What Health Information Should You Provide?

You may be asked to provide certain information 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 accidents or injuries. There may be a written form to fill out. More information may be requested if a specific health problem is being addressed than for a general massage session.

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 makeup or hair-style. Let the therapist know if this is a concern. They may either modify their technique, be especially careful, or skip an 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 often 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 especially important after the first massage. The more massage you receive, the less likely you will experience post-massage soreness.

**Length of Session:** Massage sessions generally last from 30 minutes to 1½ hours. The amount of time depends on the purpose of the session, the therapist's schedule, and the availability of your time and resources.