

Massage

Integrated and Complementary Medicine



What is Massage?

While there are a variety of types of massage, it can generally be categorized as physical movement and stimulation of muscles and tissues to provide physical relief. Massage therapists typically use different movements including pushing and rubbing. It may also include trigger point therapy to target a specific muscle or tissue. While still not widely used, massage is becoming a more common method as part of a comprehensive treatment plan to promote recovery from a wound, illness, or injury. A study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified that 6.8 percent of adults used massage in 2012.¹

Why is it used?

Massage therapy is used for a wide range of ailments including pain, headaches, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and anxiety.^{2,3} A recent study conducted at military pain management centers found that eight percent of service members suffering from chronic pain as a result of injuries sustained in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) sought massage therapy as a treatment option.⁴ It may also provide general relaxation when recovering from an illness or injury.

Benefits

Scientific studies differ on the benefits of massage therapy and the long-term benefits are dependent upon continued massage therapy. A 2010 study identified that massage therapy is beneficial in the treatment of chronic pain and headaches, and it may be a useful element of a comprehensive treatment plan for illness or injury.⁵ Additionally, studies have shown that massage therapy can increase quality of life for cancer patients by reducing pain, and with that improving state of mind.⁶

Availability

Massage is currently not covered by TRICARE. Check with your healthcare provider about possible options for seeking this treatment.

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Additional Information

- [National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine on Massage](#)
- [Helping to Heal the Trauma of Combat through Massage Therapy](#)
- [American Massage Therapy Association](#)

References

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3. Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury. PTSD Fact Sheet. http://www.dcoe.mil/Libraries/Documents/DCoE_PTSDFactSheet_20140410.pdf. Accessed 10 July 2014.
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6. Massage Therapy for Health Purposes: What You Need to Know. National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/massage/massageintroduction.htm>. Published Sept 2006. Updated February 2014. Accessed 10 July 2014.