



Information sheet: Massage

What is massage?

Massage is a hands-on therapy that works on the skin and soft tissue. It comes in a variety of forms and can be applied to the whole body or target specific areas, such as the head, face, back or feet. Popular types of massage include body or Swedish massage, sports massage, remedial massage, Indian head massage, and Ayurvedic massage.

What does the therapy do?

Many find massage particularly effective at relieving tension that has built up in the muscle and other soft tissue, which, if left unchecked, can take its toll on our general health and wellbeing. However, it is used by people for a variety of reasons. Some use it to simply relax and unwind, while others have regular massage to manage or cope with a specific physical, mental or emotional problem. Many aspiring and professional athletes also have massage before and after training and competing, in order to stay in optimum condition and aid recovery.

Is massage regulated?

Massage therapists are not regulated by statute. However, they can volunteer to be listed on an Accredited Register that has been independently approved by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care ([PSA](#)), as part of a government-backed programme, if they meet relevant criteria.

What are the training standards?

Massage sits on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) in England as a Level 3 Diploma and on the Welsh framework (CQFW) as a Level 5 Diploma. It can be learnt as a stand alone therapy or as part of a Level 3 Diploma in Complementary Therapies. This is a minimum practitioner level requirement, but extended learning up to degree level is possible.

How do I find a massage therapist?

It is important to find a therapist who is appropriately qualified and insured, and who belongs to a respected professional association.

The [CNHC](#) has a register that can be searched online to find a massage therapist who is on a register accredited by the [PSA](#).

The Federation of Holistic Therapists ([FHT](#)) also has a 'find a therapist' search function on their website, where a large variety of massage therapists are listed.

Are there any safety concerns?

No, if carried out by a professional therapist.

Complementary therapies such as massage should always be used alongside standard medical care and not as an alternative.

Some cautions and considerations may apply, for example, if you are pregnant or have recently had surgery. Your therapist will discuss any issues that are relevant to the treatment with you beforehand.

Is there an evidence base?

Research into the health benefits of massage is not as readily available as it is for more conventional medical treatments. However, there are a growing number of studies and clinical trials that suggest massage can help to improve sleep and mood, reduce stress and anxiety, improve mobility and function, and reduce the perception of pain in various population groups.

For research abstracts, visit:

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