

Massage Therapy *Facts For Physicians*

*Americans are turning to massage therapy for relief from injuries and many chronic and acute conditions, to help them deal with the stresses of daily life, and to maintain good health. In an August 2004 national survey of adult consumers by Opinion Research Corporation International (ORC), 38% of adults surveyed said that such health reasons as muscle soreness/stiffness/spasm, reduction of pain, greater joint flexibility or range of motion, or injury recovery and rehab would motivate them to get a massage. Thirty-five percent of adults surveyed reported they would seek therapeutic massage for relaxation or stress reduction**



We're with you all the way.

Medical professionals are becoming more knowledgeable about the efficacy and benefits of massage and are commonly integrating the services of massage therapists into patient care. Massage doesn't just feel good. It reduces the heart rate and blood pressure, increases blood circulation and lymph flow, relaxes muscles, improves range of motion and increases serotonin and endorphins, enhancing medical treatment.

In the 2004 consumer survey by ORC, of the 20 percent of adults who spoke to their healthcare providers about massage therapy, 62 percent reported their healthcare providers strongly recommended or encouraged their patients to get a massage. Of that same group, 61 percent were recommended to massage therapy by their physician and 42 percent were recommended to massage by their chiropractor. *

* August 2004 survey commissioned by AMTA

Consumers spend \$4 billion to \$6 billion a year on visits to massage therapists, according to an American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) analysis of a study by Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in November 1998.

Integration of Massage Into Hospital Care

Hospitals are bringing massage therapists on staff and wellness centers are incorporating a number of therapies — including massage — for the healing of patients.

A 2003 survey of hospitals by Health Forum for the American Hospital Association, polled hospitals about their use of CAM (complementary and alternative medicine) therapies. Of the 1,007 hospitals responding to the survey, 82 percent of the hospitals offering CAM therapies included massage therapy among their health care

offerings — the highest rate for any CAM therapy. Seventy-five percent of those offering massage reported it is used for stress management for patients, while more than 70 percent reported utilizing massage therapy for pain management and pain relief. Sixty percent reported providing massage for cancer patients.

Enhance the Health of Your Patients with Professional Massage

Massage therapy may not be the answer to all of the body's ailments, but it can clearly be beneficial — whether as an adjunct to traditional medical treatment, or a "treatment" in and of itself. Provide your patients with the full range of therapeutic care by building a relationship with a professional massage therapist.

Massage Therapy and Insurance

Health insurance companies, realizing the cost savings of massage and responding to consumer demand, may cover sessions with a massage therapist when they are a prescribed aspect of treatment. According to a survey of physicians, nurses and physicians assistants in Washington State (November 2000 to February 2001) by Group Health Cooperative, 74 percent of these medical professionals perceived the results of patient use of massage as always or usually effective for the purpose it was prescribed.

What Conditions May be Helped by Therapeutic Massage?

An increasing number of research studies show massage reduces heart rate, lowers blood pressure, increases blood circulation and lymph flow, relaxes muscles, improves range of motion, and increases endorphins. Although therapeutic massage does not increase muscle strength, it can stimulate weak, inactive muscles and, thus, partially

American Massage Therapy Association®

500 Davis Street, Suite 900 Evanston, IL 60201-4695 phone (847) 864-0123 fax (847) 864-1178 www.amtamassage.org

compensate for the lack of exercise and inactivity resulting from illness or injury. It also can hasten and lead to a more complete recovery from exercise or injury.

People with the following conditions have reported that therapeutic massage has lessened or relieved many of their symptoms.

- Arthritis¹
- Immune function disorders⁸
- Asthma and bronchitis²
- Insomnia⁹
- Carpal tunnel syndrome³
- Myofascial pain¹⁰
- Chronic and acute pain⁴
- Premature infants¹¹
- Circulatory problems⁵
- Reduced range of motion¹²
- Gastrointestinal disorders⁶ (including spastic colon, colic and constipation)
- Sports injuries¹³ (including pulled or strained muscles and ligaments)
- Stress¹⁴
- Headache⁷
- Temporomandibular joint (TMJ) dysfunction¹⁵

Contraindications for massage

- Certain forms of cancer
- Phlebitis
- Some cardiac problems
- Some skin conditions

* Refer to Massage Therapy Foundation online database of massage therapy research (www.massagetherapyfoundation.org)

Referring a Patient to a Massage Therapist How do You Determine a Therapist's Credentials?

Ask These Questions:

- Are you currently licensed as a massage therapist in this state/municipality? [Thirty-five states and the District of Columbia currently regulate and/or license massage therapists.]

- Are you a member of the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA)?
- Are you certified by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork?
- Are you a graduate of a training program that requires a minimum of 500 in-class hours? [Some states require more hours of entry-level training, e.g., New York state requires a minimum of 1000 hours of entry-level training and a passing grade on a state exam.]
- Do you have advanced training in any specific massage techniques?

How do You Find a Qualified Massage Therapist?

AMTA's Find a Massage Therapist[®], a free service of the American Massage Therapy Association, helps consumers and medical professionals find qualified massage therapists.

Founded in 1943, AMTA has more than 52,000 members. AMTA Professional Members have demonstrated a high level of skill and expertise through testing and/or education. AMTA Associate and Student Members are working toward such qualifications. AMTA has a Code of Ethics and practice standards that promote the highest quality assurance in the profession. AMTA requires Professional Members to provide evidence of specified levels of continuing education.

New AMTA Professional Members must meet at least one of the following criteria: be a graduate of a 500 in-class hour entry-level massage therapy training program; have a current AMTA-accepted city, state or provincial license; or be Nationally Certified in Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork.

¹ Field, T., Hernandez-Reif, M., Seligman, S., Krasnegor, J., Sunshine, W., Rivas-Chacon, R., & Schanberg, S. *Jrnl. Ped. Psychology*, 1997.

² Field, T., Henteleff, T., Hernandez-Reif, M., Marting, E., Mavunda, K., Kuhn, C., & Schanberg, S. *Jrnl. of Ped.*, 1997.

³ Sheon R.P., *Postgrad Med.*, 1997.

⁴ Weintraub, M. *American Journal of Pain Management*, 1992.

⁵ Meek, S.S., *J. Nurs. Sch.*, 1993.

⁶ Klauser, A.G., et.al. *Z. Gastroenterol*, 1992.

⁷ Puustjarvi, K., Airaksinen, O., Pontinen, P.J. *Acupunct. Electrother. Res.*, 1990.

⁸ Ironson, G., et.al. *Intl. Jr. Neurosc.*, 1996.

⁹ Richards, KC., *Am J Crit Care*, 1998.

¹⁰ Danneskoild-Samsøe, B., et.al. *Scand J Rehab Med.*, 1982.

¹¹ Scafidi, F.A., Field, T., Schanberg, S.M. *J. Dev. Behav. Pediatr.*, 1993.

¹² Crosman, J.L., et.al. *Jr. Orthop. & Sports Phys. Th.*, 1984.

¹³ Goats, G.C. *Br. J. Sports Med.*, 1994.

¹⁴ Field, T., Ironson, G., Scafidi, F., Nawrocki, T., Goncalves, A., Burman, I., Pickens, J., Fox, N., Schanberg, S., & Kuhn, C. *Intl. Jrnl. of Neurosc.*, 1996.

¹⁵ Blood, S.D. *Jrnl. of Am. Osteop. Assoc.*, 1986.

Questions & Answers

Q. *What is the minimum schooling required for a massage therapist?*

A. In states that regulate the profession, this is usually determined by a regulatory body or bylaws. AMTA requires Professional members to complete a minimum of 500 in-class hours from an entry-level massage therapy program, provide documentation of National Certification in Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork or have a current AMTA-accepted city, state, or provincial license.

Q. *How many states regulate massage?*

A. As of May 2005, 35 states and Washington, D.C. had passed laws to regulate massage therapy. The number of states regulating the profession has doubled since 1990.

Q. *Why isn't there a national standard or requirement for someone to be a massage therapist?*

A. As with most healthcare regulation, this is determined at the state level. Certification by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork is one indication that a massage therapist has the required hours of education, has passed a comprehensive written examination, and is qualified to practice. In many states, national certification is now a requirement for new massage therapists to practice.

Q. *What is the difference between AMTA and the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork?*

A. The American Massage Therapy Association is the premier professional association representing the massage field. Founded in 1943, it has more than 52,000 members. AMTA has an established Code of Ethics and standards of practice. AMTA supports accreditation of massage schools, education requirements for massage therapists, continuing education, clinical research on the efficacy of massage, and licensing of massage therapists by the states.

The National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (NCBTMB) administers the National Certification Examination, certifies massage therapists who pass the exam and maintain their status through continuing education.

Q. *Does the American Massage Therapy Association certify or credential massage therapists?*

A. AMTA does not certify or credential massage therapists.

Q. *What are the basic types of massage and how are they different from each other?*

A. See AMTA's Glossary of Massage Terms for an overview of the basic types of massage at www.amtamassage.org.

Q. *How do I determine what type of massage therapy my patients should have and whether they need to see someone who specializes in a particular massage or touch technique?*

A. The best approach is to find a qualified, professional massage therapist who can determine and/or recommend massage appropriate for the situation. A qualified massage therapist will work with a physician to determine the best course of therapy. AMTA's *Find a Massage Therapist*[®] national locator service can help you locate an AMTA member in your area. (See information below)

Q. *If I send a patient to a massage therapist, will payment be the patient's responsibility or will insurance reimburse for it?*

A. This will vary with patients' health plans. More health plans now regard massage therapists as recognized providers. An increasing number of health plans offer "add-on" discount plans for massage, but don't cover it as a reimbursable therapy. Check with the patient's insurance, as with all referrals, to determine how payment will be coordinated. The physician may need to write a prescription for massage therapy. In most states, massage therapists may not use CPT codes for billing.

Q. *What does a massage therapist do that a physical therapist doesn't do?*

A. A massage therapist focuses on the normalization of soft tissues affected by stress, injury, and illness through the use of manual techniques that improve circulation, enhance muscular relaxation, relieve pain, reduce stress, enhance immune function, or promote health and well-being. Massage therapists specialize in the use and application of therapeutic massage techniques. Generally, a physical therapist concentrates on rehabilitation of physical damage caused by illness and injury through the use of various modalities, including electrical, mechanical and ultrasound devices; therapeutic and rehabilitative exercise; and manual techniques.

Contact AMTA's *Find a Massage Therapist*[®] national locator service

Visit AMTA's Web site: www.amtamassage.org or call toll-free: 888-843-2682

American Massage Therapy Association
500 Davis St., Suite 900, Evanston, IL 60201-4695 • Phone: 847.864.0123 • Fax: 847.864.1178
www.amtamassage.org • E-mail: info@amtamassage.org

© 2005 American Massage Therapy Association