

# Newsletter

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## Massage Therapy

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Massage Therapy has been a universal core healing technique throughout history. Massage is one of the most natural and instinctive means of relieving pain and discomfort. Over the years, Massage Therapy in British Columbia has evolved from being a "feel good" relaxation experience to a more medically oriented therapeutic approach.

Massage Therapy is part of the referral system and is covered by the Medical Services Plan of British Columbia, ICBC and many extended health care plans. Massage Therapy is often recommended by physicians or other health care professionals for conditions such as: whiplash, headaches, back and neck pain, sprains and strains, muscle spasm, arthritis, tendonitis and bursitis, asthma, carpal tunnel and stress reduction.



Massage Therapists primarily use their hands in assessing and treating people with physical problems. To achieve success with therapeutic massage, the therapist must bring in several factors into his or her work. The client's condition and history should be assessed to get a complete picture of all the variables involved. The therapist must integrate the knowledge of human anatomy and physiology to understand the relationship of the tissues being treated.

In British Columbia, Massage Therapists must complete a three year specialized education and training program at an accredited college. The government approved curriculum requires intense study and a thorough understanding of many related scientific disciplines including anatomy, physiology, kinesiology, pathology, remedial exercise, hydrotherapy as well as many specialized manual techniques. Supervised clinical experience is an integral part of the program. To be registered in B.C., Massage Therapists must pass a provincial registration exam administered by the College of Massage Therapists.

### Sports Massage

Sports massage should play an important part in the life of any sportsman or woman whether they are injured or not. Massage has a number of benefits both physical, physiological and psychological.

Massage will:

- Maintain the body generally in better condition.
- Prevent injuries and loss of mobility.
- Cure and restore mobility to injured muscle tissue.
- Boost performance.
- Extend the overall life of your sporting career.

Physical effects are:

- **Pumping** - The stroking movements in massage suck fluid through blood vessels and lymph vessels. By increasing the pressure in front of the stroke, a vacuum is created behind. This is



especially important in tight or damaged muscle tissue as a tight muscle will squeeze blood out like a sponge, depriving the tissue of vital nutrients and energy to repair.

- **Increased tissue permeability** - Deep massage causes the pores in tissue membranes to open, enabling fluids and nutrients to pass through. This helps remove waste products such as lactic acid and encourage the muscles to take up oxygen and nutrients which help them recover quicker.
- **Stretching** - Massage can stretch tissues that could not be stretched in the usual methods. Bundles of muscle fibres are stretched lengthwise as well as sideways. Massage can also stretch the sheath or fascia that surrounds the muscle, so releasing any tension or pressure build up.
- **Break down scar tissue** - Scar tissue is the result of previous injuries or trauma and can affect muscle, tendons and ligaments. This can lead to inflexible tissues that are prone to injury and pain.
- **Improve tissue elasticity** - Hard training can make tissues hard and inelastic. This is one reason why training may not result in improvements. Massage helps reverse this by stretching the tissues.
- **Opens micro-circulation** - Massage does increase blood flow to tissues, but so does exercise. What massage also does is open or dilate the blood vessels and by stretching them this enables nutrients to pass through more easily.

Physiological effects are:

- **Pain reduction** - Tension and waste products in muscles can often cause pain. Massage helps reduce this in many ways including releasing the body's endorphins.
- **Relaxation** - Muscles relax through heat generated, circulation and stretching. Mechanoreceptors which sense touch, pressure, tissue length and warmth are stimulated causing a reflex relaxation.

Psychological effects are:

- **Anxiety reduction** - through the effects mentioned above, relaxation is induced and thereby reduces anxiety levels.
- **Invigorating** - if massage is done with brisk movements such as what would be done before an event then this can produce an invigorating feeling.

### **Massage tips**

The day after a deep massage you may be a little sore especially if you are not used to it. Don't have a massage the day before an important competition unless you are sure it works for you. Leave a day or so to recover and then reap the benefits.