

## Where can I learn more about massage therapy?

American Cancer Society

<http://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatmentsandsideeffects/complementaryandalternativemedicine/more-cam-info>

Cancer Council of New South Wales

<http://www.cancerouncil.com.au/17958/b1000/massage-and-cancer-42/massage-and-cancer-benefits-of-touch/>

Mayo Clinic

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/massage/SA00082>

Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine

<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/massage>

**Please consult with your healthcare provider before starting any complementary therapy.**

# Massage Therapy

## An Overview



Prepared by



COMMUNITY  
CANCER  
CONNECTIONS



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
College of Nursing

1305 N. Martin Ave.  
Tucson, AZ 85721  
(520) 626-6151

## What is massage therapy?

**Massage therapy is the pressing, rubbing, and manipulation the muscles and other soft tissues of the body. Massage therapy is often considered part of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM).**

### Massage therapy:

- Relieves muscle tension by lengthening and broadening the muscle fibers
- Increases range of motion in joints
- Releases scar tissue that can cause pain and dysfunction through deep specific friction, stripping and myofascial release

## Why should I use massage therapy?

**Current literature indicates that outcomes experienced by patients using massage include:**

- Improved quality of life
- Improved ability to function and move in their environment
- Decreased pain
- Decreased tension
- Improved body image and understanding of their bodily sensations.

### People with cancer often use massage to:

- Address problems with lymphedema associated with surgeries or removal of lymph nodes
- Release scar tissue and increase range of motion due to surgical adhesions
- Improve overall health and wellbeing and strengthen their immune systems
- Improve mind-body connection and to reconnect with their body
- Decrease the tension and stress that often accompanies cancer treatments, the threat of cancer and fear associated with this disease

- Decrease lymphedema by using techniques that encourage the flow of lymph through the channels
- Decrease pain and headaches that are associated with muscle tension such as pain around the eye, temple or jaw

## What is a massage therapy session like?

**Typically, a massage therapy session will last 1 to 1.5 hours.** Some therapists will come to your home to deliver the therapy. **When you first meet the therapists, you will receive an intake form that includes a medical history section. Please be very thorough in your description of your cancer treatments.** Your therapist will discuss your goals and concerns around treatment. **If there are treatment “red flags” you will be asked specific questions so that the therapy is safe for you.** The therapist will leave the room allowing you to disrobe; although how much you decide to remove is completely up to you. You will be asked to lay face up or down on the table and under the sheets. Only the areas that are being directly massage will be undraped. When you’re finished the therapist will leave the room so that you can get dressed privately. They will then return, give you water and provide instructions that will aid your recovery.

**It is also important to inform your massage therapist if you have had any lymph nodes removed, if you are currently going through chemotherapy or radiation, if you have lymphoma, metastatic cancer, or if you have any clotting.**