

Complementary Therapies

Massage Therapy

Massage therapy is an adjunctive treatment that complements health maintenance and well-being. The benefits include

- 1) Relaxation and stress relief
- 2) Greater flexibility
- 3) A stronger immune system
- 4) Flushed toxins from tissues
- 5) An overall increased sense of well-being

Swedish massage is an old form of basic massage. It promotes relaxation and uses effleurage (light or deep stroking) and gentle petrissage (kneading the muscles) to warm tissues. It speeds the flow of oxygen and nutrients to repair damaged tissues. For example, used muscles become shorter and tightened and will eventually produce muscle spasm. The body is attempting to get rid of knots or lumps, often felt in our shoulders, neck or lower back. Massage goes quicker to the brain than pain. The body becomes less tense. The spasm cycle is interrupted and the lymphatic flow is increased to boost T-cell production in the immune system.

Therapeutic, or sports, massage goes deep down into the underlying layer of muscles that attach bones to tendons and ligaments.

It is recommended that a first time massage should proceed from the outer layers of muscle to the deeper ones gradually. If the massage is too deep, you will feel sore and tender the next day. Water and rest will help the body rid itself of the toxins that have been trapped and released into the tissues.

Many other types of massage are available. They include Thai Chi, Shiatsu and polarity. They can all be deeper and require more advanced practice. Talk to your therapist about his or her experience and techniques and whether or not you want a gentle or deep massage.

Massachusetts requires massage therapists to be certified. There is no licensure required. Today, very few health insurance companies will cover massage services. Most will supply you with a preferred provider list. This is a list of therapists who agree to charge you a 20 percent discount from their ordinary fee. The cost, therefore, can be anywhere from \$40 to \$60 per hour if the massage therapist ordinarily charges \$55 to \$75 per hour.

A feeling of being tired often follows a massage. This is total relaxation of all your muscles. Be careful not to overdo. Be kind to yourself and enjoy this time of relief from tension and an increased feeling of calmness. If you are considering massage, or any alternative therapy, remember to always check with your medical team first.

—Dale B. Caron, RN, CMT

MISSION STATEMENT

Rays of Hope is a quarterly patient advocacy publication with contributions from Lahey Clinic patients and health care workers. Our goal is to provide inspiring patient stories and resource information for our readers. We dedicate *Rays of Hope* to all of our oncology patients.

Rays of Hope

Rays of Hope is published four times a year for patients of the Sophia Gordon Cancer Center at Lahey Clinic. For information or to make a comment, write:
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Reiki

Reiki is an ancient Japanese healing technique that increases energy flow in your body, beginning a natural healing process. While dressed in comfortable clothing and lying on a massage table, you will experience a treatment consisting of gentle hand placements. Warmth from the hands can be felt at each placement. Some experiences include deep relaxation, a calm vibration throughout the body, meditative or out of body states, and even sleep. The heightened peace or internal "glow" can be felt for 24 to 48 hours after a session.

Reiki is for all ages. It can be used for alleviating ailments such as stress, pain, headaches, migraines, stomach and digestive problems, asthma, diabetes, fibromyalgia, injuries, menstrual pain, fertility problems, sinus pain, anxiety, depression, ADD, and many more.

Additionally, it is excellent for pregnant women. Reports have shown children who have received Reiki in the womb are calmer by nature and the deliveries are smoother. Many clients starting a session with headaches, stress or other ailments find relief shortly into the session. By relaxing and opening the mind and body during the treatment the experience of relief increases.

Reiki practitioners can be trained in four levels, Reiki I, Reiki II, Reiki master, and Reiki master/teacher. To find a practitioner, check local holistic centers, spas, hospitals, online searches or the yellow pages. It is a wonderful way to help clear the mind.

Before trying Reiki or any alternative therapy, remember to always check with your medical team first.

—Bindy Johnson
Reiki Master/Teacher