

Frequently asked questions concerning Massage Therapy

What is Massage Therapy?

“The practice of massage therapy is the assessment of the soft tissues and joints of the body and the treatment and prevention of physical dysfunction and pain of the soft tissues and joints by manipulation to develop, maintain, rehabilitate or augment physical function, or relieve pain.” 1.

What training is required to become a massage therapist?

To practice massage therapy within the province of Nova Scotia a therapist is required to have successfully completed a 2-year program within the field of massage therapy, which involves the study of anatomy, physiology, specific massage therapy techniques, and clinical experience. The therapist must also be an active member of the Massage Therapists' Association of Nova Scotia. Krista MacDougall graduated from ICT Northumberland College with honours on July 17th, 2003 and is an active member of MTANS.

What conditions do massage therapists treat?

Massage Therapists treat such conditions as: low back pain, whiplash, neck and shoulder tension, sprains, strains, tendonitis, sports injuries, carpal tunnel syndrome, arthritis, bursitis, headaches/migraines, fibromyalgia, pregnancy discomfort, stress, respiratory problems, TMJ dysfunction, and symptomatic relief from a variety of diseases (i.e. Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's, etc)

Do provincial health care programs cover massage therapy?

No, Nova Scotia healthcare does not currently cover massage therapy however many private health insurance companies and government group medical insurance provide full or partial coverage under extended insurance plans. It is recommended that you check your individual policy to determine your type of coverage.

Do I need a referral from my doctor to see a massage therapist?

If you are paying for the massage therapy treatments and are not looking at getting reimbursed from your insurance company, you do not require a doctor's referral. If your insurance company will be reimbursing you, a doctor's referral may be required depending on your extended insurance plan (recommended checking into plan prior to treatment).

Are there any preparations I need to make before my appointment?

It is recommended that you refrain from eating approximately 90 minutes prior to the massage treatment. Massage is similar to a workout where blood is redirected from your digestive system to the peripheral working tissues. Therefore, if you have a large meal in your belly digestion will be poor as the food is not getting priority and you may experience some discomfort during the treatment. It is also recommended that you remove all jewellery prior to the massage and be prepared to put long hair up and out of the way.

Where will my massage take place?

The massage will take place in a warm, quiet, enclosed treatment room where you will have the option of listening to light, relaxing music while you are treated on the massage table.

Will the massage be painful?

Generally, massage therapy treatments are not painful. The therapist works within the pain tolerance level of each individual patient and modifies the pressure accordingly. Certain treatment techniques can be more painful than others, such as the breaking down of scar tissue, but this is short term and communication between the therapist and patient is maintained throughout these types of treatments.

What can I expect during my first massage therapy visit?

Prior to your first treatment you will be asked to complete a medical history form. This information is confidential and is necessary in case there are any contraindications to treatment and to give the therapist an overall understanding of your health history. The therapist will then discuss your current problem and perform a physical assessment which will involve a quick postural scan, range of motion testing, and possible orthopaedic and/or neurological testing depending on the reason for your visit. Once the assessment is completed, the therapist will discuss the proposed treatment plan with you outlining the techniques that will be used and ask you for your consent prior to proceeding with the massage. You are encouraged to ask questions throughout the process, if needed, for clarification. Remember the old saying – no question is stupid!

What am I expected to wear during the massage?

Depending on the area to be treated, you may or may not need to undress. Generally, people remove most or all of their clothing for a full body massage. If you are not comfortable with this, simply undress to your comfort level and the therapist will modify the treatment accordingly. The massage therapist will leave the treatment while you undress and ask if you are draped and lying on the table before re-entering the treatment room. Throughout the treatment you will be draped with a sheet, with only the specific body part the therapist is working on being undraped at any given time.

How long will the treatment last?

The initial treatment is always 1 hour as it involves a discussion of your medical history form, a physical assessment, and massage treatment. Subsequent treatments for the problem assessed in the initial treatment can range from 30-90 minutes depending on the treatment required. If you have a new injury different from the initial chief complaint, another one hour session will be required for a full assessment of the area. As for full body relaxation massages, they are generally 60 – 90 minute treatment.

How will my body feel after the massage?

Most people feel very relaxed after a massage treatment. Massage tends to lower blood pressure so take care getting up off the treatment table as you may experience some dizziness if you move too quickly. After this initial relaxation period, many people feel invigorated which can last for days. Some people also experience some muscle stiffness the next day but this can be alleviated by drinking water

post massage to rid your body of toxins released from the muscles during the massage and through epsom salt baths which also encourage the release of toxins from the body.

How frequently should I come for massage treatments?

The frequency of visits for massage therapy depends on the condition being treated. Therefore, it is on a case specific basis. In general, specific injuries will require regular visits for a designated period of time to restore the normal function of the area. The massage therapist will discuss a treatment schedule with you once the problem area has been properly assessed. Those people who do not have a specific injury per se however seek massage treatments for maintenance or preventative reasons generally will require 1-2 visits per month. This again is a guideline and may require modification depending on the patient.