

It's widely accepted that there are physical and emotional benefits to receiving massage therapy. Even a short visit to your therapist's massage table can make a big difference to your mood and your muscles. Here are some specific areas where massage can help contribute to your overall well-being, and some risks you should be aware of before seeking a massage therapist.

## Benefits

### PHYSICAL BENEFITS

The most obvious benefits of massage are purely physical. These include relief of muscle tension and spasms, improved joint flexibility and alleviation of chronic conditions like back pain, tension headaches and hypertension.

### STRESS REDUCTION

Anxiety and nervousness can be distracting, and in some cases crippling. Massage reduces mental stress and can put you at ease – the natural effect of manual pressure and movement on your body. Oxygen and blood circulation increase, while heart rate and blood pressure decrease.

### EATING DISORDERS

A recent article in Psychology Today explained how massage therapy helps patients better cope with their eating disorders by boosting dopamine and serotonin levels, reducing stress-hormones and simply improving their mood.

### DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

Similarly, some people report an improvement in their depression symptoms after a massage. Students massaged before an exam demonstrated less anxiety and calmer respiratory rates during the exam, and allowed them to perform better.

### INCREASED ALERTNESS

It's no mistake that businesses like to provide health coverage for massage therapy to employees. People who receive regular massage therapy are more alert during the workday and exhibit fewer symptoms of stress.

## Risks

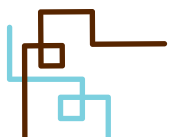
When provided by a trusted, trained therapist, massage is generally very safe. Still, it can pose a danger to you if you have certain physical conditions. Speak with your physician and discuss the appropriateness of massage therapy if you have any of the following:

- Recent heart attack
- Unhealed fractures
- Severe osteoporosis
- Burns or open wounds
- Unexplained pain
- Cancer
- Blood clots
- Fractures
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Pregnancy

During and after a massage, be conscious of your physical well-being. While a massage can commonly leave you feeling sore it shouldn't cause pain or discomfort. If it does, alert your massage therapist or speak to your physician.

In rare circumstances, a massage may result in:

- Internal bleeding
- Nerve damage
- Temporary paralysis
- Allergic reactions (to massage oils or lotions)



Source:  
Mayo Clinic