



## Patient Resources

### Massage Therapy



Massage therapy is used to soothe joints and muscles, as well as to help people relax. It is often considered a complementary therapy, which means that it is used in addition to a conventional therapy to treat a specific ailment. Scientific research shows that regular use of massage therapy can lead to improvements in arthritis symptoms, such as pain, stiffness, range of motion and overall function of the joints. The benefits of massage are short-term, so individuals should expect to receive massage therapy consistently to notice improvements.

#### Who is it for?

Everyone can receive massage therapy, or even self-massage to achieve the same health benefits. There are, however, several types of massage therapy that individuals can receive based on their needs and physical condition. Often, the type of massage is dependent upon the level of pressure that is applied to joints and tissue. Many studies have found that light to moderate pressure is best for individuals experiencing pain and discomfort in their joints and surrounding tissue. *It is important that individuals with arthritis discuss their thoughts of massage therapy with their rheumatologist to ensure that massage therapy is a safe option.*

#### Does it work?

The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) has completed many studies on massage therapy and its uses for pain that scientifically demonstrate that it may have a positive effect for patients with chronic low-back pain, neck pain, hand and wrist arthritis, osteoarthritis of the knee, fibromyalgia, and many other conditions. Massage therapy has been shown to reduce the levels of cortisol, our body's stress hormone; increase the production of serotonin, a hormone that improves our mood; and lower the production of substance P, a neurotransmitter often linked to pain. The effect of this combination relieves pain, stress, anxiety, and may even improve sleep. Although massage therapy has many positive benefits, it works best in combination with conventional therapies.

#### Before you make your appointment...

- Discuss your thoughts of receiving massage therapy with your rheumatologist to ensure that massage therapy is a safe option for you.
- Ask about the training, experience, and credentials of the massage therapist you are considering, as well as the number of sessions that may be needed, the cost of each session, and insurance coverage.
- Inform your massage therapist of your needs and physical condition.

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