

THE CENTER for CLINICAL MASSAGE

Ken Laymon

Massage for older adults

Move better, feel better, heal better

Although your need for touch doesn't go away as you age, the results you want from professional bodywork may change. First of all, massage can help increase your vitality, giving you more energy to do what you enjoy. And because it helps you relax, it can improve your ability to drop off into restful sleep at night. Massage improves circulation, so it can help increase the flow of oxygen to the brain, temporarily boosting mental clarity. Increased circulation can also impact how you look and feel by improving the condition of the body's largest organ — the skin. And improved circulation can actually help speed healing from injuries or surgery.

Massage can reduce pain

For many people with painful conditions such as arthritis and fibromyalgia, the relaxing and soothing effects of massage may come as a life saver. It can relieve swelling and coax you to breathe slowly and deeply, reinforcing the relief of anxiety and pain. Studies have even shown a decreased need for pain medications with regular massage.

Boost sense of well-being

The best thing about massage may be that it simply feels good. It can increase your flexibility and help you feel more at home in your body. It can improve your sense of well-being for hours, and even days after a session.



Massage therapy increases health, relaxation and the sense of well-being.



Massage supports your exercise goals by enhancing balance and flexibility.

Massage and exercise

Movement can be easier and more comfortable

With all our advances in science and nutrition, seniors are living longer, more active and healthier lives. As part of that development, more people are exercising. That may, at times, present challenges such as muscle pain. On the other hand, if you are exercising very little or infrequently, you may be experiencing loss of strength, or your muscles and joints may feel tight and uncomfortable. Whether you want to maintain your active life or prepare to step up your activity, massage can help.

Easier movement

Massage helps increase lubrication and flexibility in and around joints, and specific techniques stretch and lengthen muscles. Increased flexibility and muscle length makes movement easier and more comfortable. On top of that, because massage increases circulation, more oxygen and nutrition flow to contracted muscles, helping them to relax and recover whether you have been inactive or too active.

You may feel more inclined to exercise

When your muscles and joints feel better, you are more likely to want to exercise. Combine massage with exercise and stretching, and you can maintain or begin to regain agility, balance and mobility.

Get the best massage you can

Adapting the sessions for you

Massage therapists like to enter into a partnership with their clients. They want you to have the best massage you can. And that depends on hearing from you about your needs. Almost everything about a massage can be adjusted, such as your position on the table. You can receive a massage without turning over on your stomach, or even lie on your side for the entire massage. Dress is also optional. You can undress partially, completely or not at all.

Talk with your therapist

Pressure can be an issue. Your massage therapist can use light to deep pressure, it just depends on what you like. Here's the rub, however — your massage therapist can't read your mind. That includes music selection. If you prefer to have a quiet room with no music, tell your therapist. If you have some favorite music, ask your therapist if you can bring it with you to play during your session.



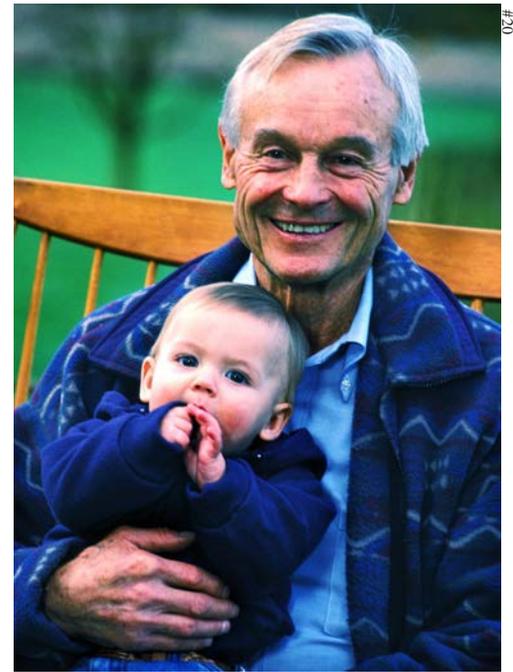
Massage can be received through your clothing and in a seated position, if you choose.

If you are sore or extra tired after a massage, tell your therapist at the next session. She or he can help troubleshoot. Maybe you would do better with shorter, more frequent massage for instance. If you have arthritis or some other painful condition, your therapist can also talk with you about coping strategies between sessions.

If you can't get out

If you don't drive or you have difficulty getting around because of a recent surgery, injury or other condition, consider asking if your therapist can come to you. Whether you live in your own home or a retirement community, massage therapists are usually a phone call away.

If you are a family member, regular massage can offer your elder comfort that goes beyond words. In addition to bringing all the benefits of touch right to that special older adult in your life, massage therapists also develop a meaningful and heartfelt connection with the folks they serve.



Tactile needs do not seem to change with aging. If anything, they seem to increase.

*—Ashley Montagu,
author of Touching*