

Massage

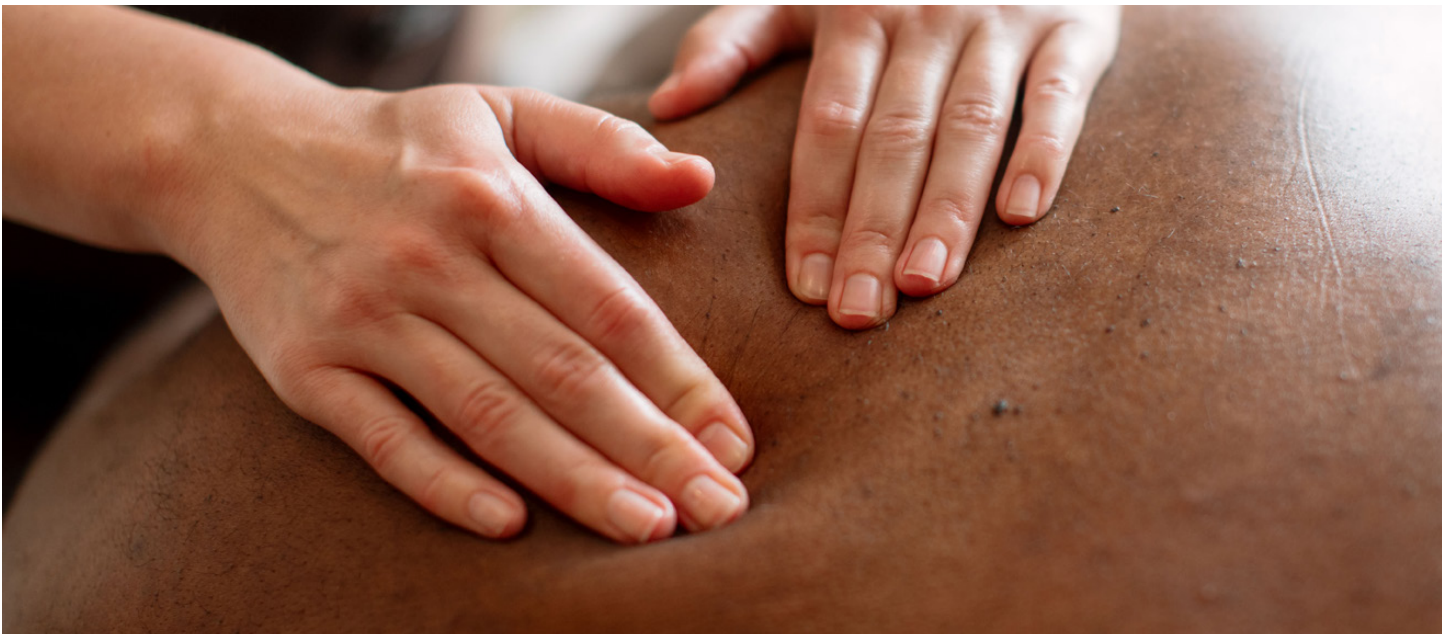
Massage involves rubbing or kneading soft tissues of the body. Skin, muscles, tendons, and ligaments are soft tissues. Massage can be used to help reduce pain, promote healing and improve your recovery after surgery. It also can promote relaxation and reduce stress and anxiety.

Ask your care team how a massage trained therapist can treat you safely. Friends and family members also can perform massage. But they may need special instructions to be able to treat you safely. If you are a caregiver, remember that even simple foot or head and neck massage will offer lasting benefits for your loved one's sleep, pain, and mood.

If you plan to use a massage therapist when you get home, try to arrange this before surgery. Look for a massage therapist who is licensed or certified. Ask the therapist whether he or she has recent experience working with people recovering from surgery. You may be asked what type of surgery you plan to have or what area the surgery will affect.
(Refer to sample questions)

PRACTICING MASSAGE

- 1 Create a warm and relaxing space to do this.
- 2 Have your loved one sit or lay in a comfortable position. Regularly ask if your loved one is comfortable.
- 3 Use a lubricant, such as coconut or jojoba oil. If your health care provider tells you not to use these products, follow your provider's directions.
- 4 Do not massage incisions. Avoid massaging bony areas, such as elbows and knees.
- 5 Do not massage the surgical area. Massage the tissue above and below the surgical area.
- 6 Massage gently, slowly and rhythmically. Be careful not to massage so hard that it is painful. Regularly ask your loved one if what you are doing is uncomfortable. Stop if it is.





CAUTION

Massage should not be performed near a blood clot (deep vein thrombosis (DVT), burns, open wounds, or recent surgical incisions. Medical clearance from your physician should be obtained prior to massage if you have the following conditions: severe osteoporosis, bone metastases, thrombocytopenia, pulmonary embolus or any other chronic conditions.

OTHER RESOURCES

To help you find a board certified massage therapist in your area, refer to the following national registries. The Mayo Clinic cannot endorse the therapists but each organization has a stringent credentialing process:

National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB) therapist directory: ncbtmb.org/directory-search/?stype_selected=gd_bctherapist

American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) therapist directory: amtamassage.org/findamassage/index.html

Associated Bodywork & Massage Professional Practitioner search page: abmp.com/public

If you are a caregiver or partner you can utilize the videos for instructions:

- Instructions for a simple foot massage: youtube.com/watch?v=Bu6RlmvuDA4
- Instructions for a gentle head and shoulder massage: youtube.com/watch?v=DUhCpAG8Dds

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CHOOSING A PROSPECTIVE MASSAGE THERAPIST

Have you worked with anyone who has had my surgery?

Ideally, you want to work with a therapist who has experience supporting recovery from the specific surgery you received. At minimum, you should find a therapist who has experience working with people recovering from surgery in general.

Would you adapt your pressure?

There are recovery and healing-related risks inherent in pressure that is “too deep.” You want a therapist who will work at a safe, appropriate pressure that supports your recovery rather than challenges your body.

How would you position me if I can't lie on my stomach or my back?

Safe, effective massage can be provided in a variety of comfortable, well-supported positions. The therapist should have specific bolsters, pillows, and protocols to position you safely in a relaxed position, regardless of your surgery-related limitations.

Do you know how to safely work with swelling?

Massage can often help with swelling as long as the therapist takes into consideration pressure and direction of strokes.

Do you have training and experience in scar tissue mobilization and recovery? Many therapists have specialized training in this. If you want this specific work, find a therapist with specialized training.

Look for a licensed massage therapist who has successfully completed board examinations conducted either by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB) or Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx)