

How to choose the right massage

For some, just hearing the word “massage” induces a sense of calm, but not everyone is so familiar with the world of massage therapy. How do you know if you need a massage, and if you do, then what kind?

“If you feel stressed, low-energy, fatigued, in pain, depressed or have migraines – find a massage therapist,” urges Brenda Tubbe, a certified massage therapist and practitioner of craniosacral massage.

With dozens of techniques to

WRITTEN BY SANDRA COOK



Feeling stressed or fatigued? Get a massage.

choose from, picking the right massage can be a daunting decision. Massage therapy can relieve stress, boost energy, fight fatigue, alleviate pain, control migraines and more, so Tubbe offers the following descriptions to help you discover the massage

technique that best fits your needs.

Relaxation massage uses soothing strokes with light to firm touch to help you de-stress, sleep better and boost the immune system. This technique also helps facilitate recovery from surgery.

Craniosacral therapy targets the central nervous system, which runs from the head (cranium) to the tailbone (sacrum). A light touch is used along the head, neck and spine to correct nerve problems such as pain and paralysis, migraines and Bell's palsy. “Clients often report a

deep sense of relaxation and mental clarity, as well as immediate pain relief,” says Tubbe.

Sports massage is intended for anyone who frequently engages in a particular physical activity – be it running 10 miles a day or working on a computer 10 hours a day. The technique involves a firm touch and trigger-point therapy and can be used pre- or post-workout (or workday), as well as for rehabilitation from injury or surgery.

Prenatal massages use firm, gentle pressure to release pain in the lower back and shoulders, resolve fatigue and decrease joint tenderness. The therapist uses pillows and bolsters to ensure the mother's comfort and pressure relief.

Infant massage uses gentle strokes,

very light pressure and rocking movements to induce sleep, promote relaxation, encourage weight gain, relieve colic, improve sensory integration and enhance neurological development in newborns.

Connective, soft or deep tissue massages use firm to deep pressure along with kneading, pulling and stretching of muscles, fascia and muscle groups to address chronic pain, sore areas, spasms, body imbalances due to integration problems and extreme tension points held in the body's larger, stronger muscles. Techniques include deep pressure, Rolfing, Trager (rocking) approach, myofascial release, myotherapy, cupping and friction.

Face and scalp massages are done on a table or in a chair and focus on the client's specific need to relax the tendon under the scalp and increase flexibility of the facial muscles. Small, circular massage strokes, light kneading movements, trigger-point therapy and aromatherapy often are used for people who have facial paralysis or other cranial system-related problems.

Chair massages are popular in such high-traffic spots as airports, office buildings and malls. These offer kneading, compression and trigger-point therapy. This is a great way to increase circulation in the hands, wrists, arms, back and neck prior to working long hours at the computer or overusing those muscles in strenuous physical tasks such as moving boxes or participating in sports. This is not intended to restore or rehabilitate the entire body. ■