



How to Get the Most Out of Your Massage

Learn what steps before, during and after massage will give the most benefits to a comforting and restorative massage therapy experience.

A relaxing massage therapy session is part client and part practitioner. The massage therapist uses skilled techniques to help muscles and tissues relax. The client of massage can use simple steps and guidelines to ensure a relaxing experience and help the benefits last longer.

First time and seasoned clients alike can benefit from these suggestions to prepare for, experience, and take care after, a massage.

Preparing for a Massage Appointment

Prior to your therapeutic massage appointment follow these steps to ensure a relaxing experience:

- Get plenty of fluids in the 24 hours leading up to your massage
- Shaving the same day of a massage can lead to razor burn or a rash; avoid shaving legs prior to a massage
- Shower the same day of the massage or as close to the appointment as possible – if you have been working out of doors or exercising the sweat and dirt can become mixed in with massage oils and creams and make for an exfoliating or gritty experience
- Plan to arrive a few minutes early to complete any paperwork and to avoid traffic or parking issues
- Disclose any health conditions and allergies to the massage therapist before your session



What to do During the Massage

For some clients receiving a massage is such a relaxing experience that they will fall asleep within minutes. Others have a harder time winding down for their massage. There is no right or wrong way to enjoy a massage but here are some suggestions to relax during your session:

- Disrobe to *your* level of comfort. Unclothed areas of your body will be draped at all times for your warmth and sense of security.
- Try following your breathing for a few minutes: breathe in, breathe out
- Focus on listening to the music playing
- Use meditation to enhance the relaxation of the massage
- Don't force relaxation – if you are in a talkative mood and your mind won't slow down feel free to chat during your massage. You may actually relax more if you “go with the flow” and talk through your day and things on your mind than keeping quiet
- Be sure to communicate clearly with your massage practitioner during the session on comfort level, room temperature and music. You don't need to "endure" a massage experience that is unpleasant so speak up if the pressure is too deep, the table is too warm or if the music is distracting.



Taking Care of Yourself after a Massage

To help the benefits of your massage last longer try these guidelines:

- Be sure to have adequate water intake after your massage. Massage causes toxins and metabolic debris to be released from the body's soft tissues. Drinking plenty of water for several hours after your massage will help flush these wastes out of your body which will maximize the loosening of your muscles and joints and minimize any day-after soreness.
- Practice any homework or instructions your practitioner has given you to keep up the benefits between sessions (i.e. stretches, relaxation methods or posture awareness)
- Take things easy for a couple of hours or take a nap after your massage to enjoy longer benefits
- Try taking a relaxing bath or foot bath a day or two after your massage to keep the relaxation going. A warm bath with two cups of Epsom salts aids in relaxing tight, sore, and strained muscles. It also eases stress and draws toxins from the body. The magnesium in Epsom salt helps to produce serotonin, a mood-elevating chemical in the brain that creates a feeling of calm and relaxation. It may also help to lower blood pressure, and improve sleep and concentration.
- Limit caffeine, alcohol, and sugar consumption for 24 hours after your massage while your body continues to detoxify.
- Ask your practitioner for some self-massage tips for common tension areas

Maintain regular massage or bodywork appointments to keep stress and tight muscles at manageable levels. Our lives are so busy that time just slips away and before we know it, several months have passed since your last massage and the tightness and tension in your muscles have returned with a vengeance. Remember, massage is most effective when received regularly.