

Your Guide

to Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork

What are the benefits of massage?

Many people think of it as a luxury, but massage is much more than simple relaxation. The therapeutic benefits of massage continue to be studied, but research has shown it to be effective in:

- Decreasing pain
- Reducing anxiety and stress
- Improving range of motion
- Decreasing carpal tunnel symptoms
- Reducing muscle soreness
- Boosting immune system
- Lessening depression
- Relieving back pain
- Promoting tissue regeneration
- Easing withdrawal symptoms
- Treating cancer-related fatigue
- Easing labor pain and stress
- Relieving migraine pain
- And more

What to look for in a massage therapist

When selecting a massage therapist, you want to make sure that he or she is skilled, knowledgeable and ethical. The easiest way to ensure this is to ask whether they are nationally certified. If so, there should be a certificate from the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (NCBTMB) in their office – or an NCBTMB decal.



To be nationally certified, a massage therapist must:

- Demonstrate mastery of core skills and knowledge
- Complete 500+ hours of massage education
- Pass an NCBTMB standardized exam
- Uphold the organization's Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics
- Take part in continuing education

Massage therapy is not regulated in every state, so it is important that you look for the profession's official seal of certification. It is your assurance of a competent and qualified practitioner.

*Certification and excellence
go hand in hand.*

What is massage therapy?

Massage is believed to be one of the oldest forms of medical care, dating back to the pharaohs of ancient Egypt. Its vital role in healthcare was universal. In 2700 BC, a Chinese book of internal medicine recommended "the massage of skin and flesh". More than two thousand years later, Hippocrates – the father of modern medicine – wrote that "the physician must be acquainted with many things and assuredly with rubbing" (the ancient Greek word for massage).

Today, the term massage therapy is used to describe the manipulation of soft tissue – muscles, skin and/or tendons – by fingertips, hands, fists, elbows and even feet. Bodywork is a general term for manual techniques that involve touch and movement and are used to promote health and healing.

Almost a quarter of all American adults have received at least one massage in the past twelve months. And the number continues to grow as more and more people discover the benefits of massage – for relaxation, rehabilitation and rejuvenation.



How to find a nationally certified practitioner

With more than 90,000 NCBTMB certified massage therapists in physician offices, private practices, spas, rehab facilities, health clubs and hospitals nationwide, you're sure to find one nearby. All you have to do is visit www.ncbtmb.org and use the Find a Practitioner resource located on the home page. This online tool lets you search for a professional by name – or by city/state/zip. You can also specify the type (modality) of therapeutic massage or bodywork you prefer.



Look for Centers of Excellence

To locate a business that exclusively hires nationally certified massage therapists and bodyworkers, look for the NCBTMB Center of Excellence emblem. These companies are committed to upholding and advancing the highest standards in the field. To find out more, visit www.ncbtmb.org.



What to expect when receiving a massage

Although no two massages are alike, there are some things that are universal. Sessions generally take place in a quiet, comfortable room. It may be dimly lit and soothing music is often played.

The practitioner will begin by asking questions, such as the reason you are seeking massage therapy, any injuries or medical conditions you may have, and any other information that may help them better serve you.

The massage therapist will then excuse himself/herself so you can disrobe to your level of comfort. You will then get on the table under the provided cover and relax, either face up or face down.

You will be draped at all times – only the area being worked on will be exposed. A typical full body session includes your back, arms, legs, feet, hands, head, neck and shoulders. Oil or lotion is often used.

When the massage is complete, the practitioner will leave the room so you can get dressed. Sit up slowly and, in the hours after your massage, drink plenty of water.

There are many types of massage, so each experience varies. To learn more about techniques and terms, refer to the glossary in the consumer section of NCBTMB's website, www.ncbtmb.org.



About NCBTMB

The National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (NCBTMB) is the national credentialing body for massage therapists and bodyworkers. It develops standardized exams that cover a core body of knowledge, promotes professional development and offers a recertification program to renew its credential.

NCBTMB was founded in 1992 to protect the public and uphold a national standard for the industry that, until then, did not exist. Both of its exam programs have been accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).

If you would like to learn more – or have any questions – visit www.ncbtmb.org or call 1-800-296-0664.



National Certification Board for
Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork[®]

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