

### **Meeting your individual needs**

Feedback is important during your session. Let your massage therapist know about anything that is uncomfortable, for example, if the pressure used is too much or too little, if a particular area is extra-sensitive, or if scents from oils or candles are irritating. He or she will work with you to determine the approach and technique that best meets your needs.

Your massage therapist will provide for your comfortable positioning on the massage table, including extra pillows or bolsters if needed. It is not necessary to lie in a particular position, such as face down and, in fact, therapists can massage a person confined to a bed or wheelchair.

Your massage therapist may offer instruction in massage techniques for you and your loved ones to try between sessions. She or he may also instruct you in helpful relaxation techniques such as focused breathing or visualization.

### **Your therapist's qualifications**

Meeting the unique needs of cancer patients requires specialized training. Your massage therapist will be glad to answer your questions about his or her background and experience in massage for people with cancer.

### **The gift of touch**

No matter what stage of cancer you are experiencing, massage therapy can offer a rewarding opportunity to let go and receive the healing effects of relaxation. As you rest on the massage table, you will be cared for and your needs respected with a therapy that addresses not your disease, but you as a whole person. Even in a schedule crowded with medical appointments, you will find touch therapy to be a completely different experience—a restorative and healing respite.

Fountain of Youth Therapeutic Massage  
18900 Stevens Creek Blvd Suite 103  
Cupertino, Ca 95014  
[www.womenhealthmassage.com](http://www.womenhealthmassage.com)

Written by Diana Roberts Moore



© 2004 Information for People, Inc. 1-800-754-9790. [www.info4people.com](http://www.info4people.com).  
All rights reserved. No part of this brochure may be reproduced  
in any manner without written permission.



# **Massage and Cancer**



***A healing respite  
during a  
challenging time***

If you are experiencing the challenges of cancer diagnosis, treatment and side effects, massage therapy can offer a unique way to relax and restore your healing resources. Massage and other skilled touch techniques can complement medical treatment and support recovery by easing pain, reducing stress and providing emotional reassurance. At times, massage may be one of the few activities that actually feels good. Simply taking the time to receive soothing touch amidst a busy schedule of medical procedures can improve your mood and support your healing.

### **Relieving your discomfort**

Many people find that when medication doesn't completely ease their pain, massage helps. There are sound medical reasons for the ability of touch therapy to relieve pain, including increased circulation and release of the body's natural painkillers, such as endorphins. But the most profound relief may come from the deep relaxation you experience with massage. As you focus on the pleasant sensation of caring touch, stress and anxiety loosen their grip, allowing pain to recede to the background.

Massage can also reduce the discomforts of nausea, fatigue and insomnia. You may experience a sense of increased energy and optimism, which can extend relief of physical symptoms into the hours and days beyond your sessions.



### **Support for your recovery**

When you feel less pain and stress, your body is better able to rally its healing capabilities. For example, touch therapy can reduce pain and speed recovery of tissues affected by surgery or radiation. Therapists with advanced training can use specific techniques, applied with caution, to reduce swelling and restore pliability to scarred areas.

Massage also decreases muscle tightness and increases range of motion, which can help you feel more like stretching, exercising and enjoying your favorite recreational activities.

### **Your emotional well-being**

The nurturing, one-on-one experience of massage may help you feel cared for when going through treatment or adjusting to physical changes such as a mastectomy or hair loss. If you have experienced changes in your activity levels or social network, or are coping with fear, anxiety or depression, a massage can provide a time for acceptance of tender emotions and the changes in your life.

Massage therapists offer non-judging support and a compassionate ear. In those cases when cancer is no longer treatable, attentive touch may provide the most consoling kind of support a person can receive. No matter what your stage of treatment, skilled and caring touch can reassure that life still holds warm, positive experiences.



### **What research has to say**

Many hospitals including Memorial Sloan-Kettering, Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center and Stanford University Hospital provide massage or other touch therapies for cancer patients. Hospital studies reported in journals such as *International Journal of Oncology*, *Biology and Physics*, *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* and *International Journal of Palliative Nursing* have shown that cancer patients felt more relaxed and experienced less pain, less anxiety, or both after receiving massage or other touch therapies. Other research showed that massage reduced nausea during chemotherapy.

### **For your comfort and safety**

It is now generally accepted by the medical profession that gentle, professional touch can reduce much of the discomfort of cancer and its treatment. Your care is complex, however, so it's important to inform your physician or patient care team before receiving massage.

Timing is important. Your therapist needs to be kept up-to-date on your treatment in order to determine what is most appropriate at different points. For example, vigorous pressure is rarely advisable during or immediately following medical treatment. And some things like lymph node removal are extremely important to know about in order to gauge what techniques to use.

Keep in mind that like any input to your system, massage can tax your energy. Be sure to discuss current stamina and pain levels with your therapist. She or he may want to reschedule a session depending on your changing needs. Short sessions may be best at first, so you and your therapist can judge what works for you.

