



Massage and Cancer

A guide for people with cancer,
their families and friends

Practical
and support
information

Cancer Council Helpline

13 11 20

www.cancercouncil.com.au

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A guide for people with cancer, their families and friends

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Massage and Cancer is reviewed approximately every three years. Check the publication date above to ensure this copy is up to date.

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Note to reader

Always consult your doctor about matters that affect your health. This booklet is intended as a general introduction to the topic and should not be seen as a substitute for medical, legal or financial advice. You should obtain appropriate independent professional advice relevant to your specific situation and you may wish to discuss issues raised in this book with them.

All care is taken to ensure that the information in this booklet is accurate at the time of publication. Please note that information on cancer, including the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cancer, is constantly being updated and revised by medical professionals and the research community. Cancer Council Australia and its members exclude all liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred by use of or reliance on the information provided in this booklet.

Cancer Council NSW

Cancer Council is the leading cancer charity in NSW. It plays a unique and important role in the fight against cancer through undertaking high-quality research, advocating on cancer issues, providing information and services to the public and people with cancer, and raising funds for cancer programs. This booklet is funded through the generosity of the people of NSW. To make a donation to help defeat cancer, visit Cancer Council's website at www.cancerCouncil.com.au or phone 1300 780 113.



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Introduction

Complementary therapies are widely used in Australia, and many people with cancer use them during treatment for cancer.

Massage is a commonly used complementary therapy to provide relaxation and relief from some symptoms of cancer. Massage therapists use different terms to describe this technique, such as touch therapies and bodywork.

We hope this booklet will help you understand more about massage. It explains the benefits of touch and massage during and following cancer treatment. It includes advice on how to receive a safe, comfortable massage from a professional therapist, as well as tips for family members and friends who wish to give you a simple, gentle massage at home.

This booklet does not need to be read from cover to cover – just read the parts that are useful to you. Some terms that may be unfamiliar are explained in the glossary. You may like to pass this booklet to your family and friends for their information.

This booklet was developed with help from a range of health professionals including massage experts and people affected by cancer who have used massage as a complementary therapy.

Cancer Council Helpline **13 11 20** can arrange telephone support in different languages for non-English speakers. You can also call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) direct on **13 14 50**.



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Touch therapies

Touch is important for wellbeing. It helps people of all ages, from babies to the elderly, and on many levels – including physical and emotional. Evidence suggests it improves sleep, reduces muscular tension, provides a sense of calm, and can improve self-image, concentration and quality of life.

Touch is important during illness. It can express care, reassurance and support. During treatment or when you feel discomfort or anxiety, touch from friends or family can be comforting.

What are body-based practices?

Body-based practices involve a series of specialised movements or strokes on a person's body to provide relaxation or relief from physical and emotional symptoms. They are sometimes called touch, physical or manual therapies; soft tissue techniques; or bodywork. Massage is a body-based practice.

Touch through massage

Holding hands, hugging or sitting close to someone are ways a person with cancer can receive touch. You can also receive touch through massage.

Massage can reduce anxiety and pain, decrease nausea, and improve energy and wellbeing. Touch through massage is a way to communicate love or care, and to help re-connect with yourself and others. It can also create a nurturing environment.



Key questions

Q: What is massage?

A: Massage is an ancient technique that involves manipulating muscles and rubbing or stroking soft tissues of the body.

Massage is considered a type of complementary therapy. Complementary therapies aim to treat the whole person, not just the symptoms of disease. They are used together with conventional or mainstream medicine. Complementary therapies are not used instead of cancer treatments such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy, surgery or drug therapy.

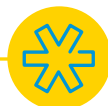
While massage doesn't treat the cancer itself, it may help reduce the side effects caused by conventional treatments and improve quality of life and wellbeing.

Q: Why do people with cancer use massage?

A: As well as improving physical symptoms, some people with cancer say that having a massage:

- makes them feel whole again
- helps them to relax
- helps them share feelings in an informal setting
- makes them feel more positive about their body
- rebuilds hope.

Research shows that massage of muscle and soft tissue does not spread cancer cells.



Q: What are the benefits of massage?

A: Scientific studies have looked at the effects of various body-based practices on people having cancer treatments such as chemotherapy and surgery. These studies have shown that massage may reduce:

- pain
- fatigue
- nausea
- anxiety and depression.

See page 8 for more information.

Individuals who have had massages during cancer treatments have reported a range of positive outcomes such as improvements in:

- sleep
- the health of the scar tissue
- quality of life
- mental clarity and alertness
- the range of movement.

Q: Is massage safe for people with cancer?

A: Light, relaxing massage can safely be given to people at all stages of cancer. Tumour or treatment sites should not be massaged to avoid discomfort or pressure on the affected area and underlying organs. If you have any concerns, talk to your doctor or call Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20.

Some people worry that massage can spread cancer cells throughout the body via the lymphatic system. The lymphatic system is a network of vessels, organs and nodes through which lymphatic fluid (lymph) flows. It is part of the body's immune system. Lymphatic circulation occurs naturally as we move.

Cancer may spread (metastasis) into the lymphatic system via the lymph nodes, or it may start in the lymphatic system itself. However, the circulation of lymph – from massage or other movement – does not cause cancer to spread. Researchers have shown that cancer develops and spreads because of changes to a cell's DNA (genetic mutations) and other processes in the body.

Q: Where can I have a massage?

A: Massage may be offered to cancer patients in some hospitals and hospices. Ask your doctor or nurse if massage is available at the centre where you are having your treatment. Some patients are able to have chemotherapy and a hand or foot massage at the same time, or you may prefer to have the massage after the treatment has finished.

You can also have a massage from a private practitioner in their own rooms. See *Finding a professional massage therapist* on page 29 for more information. Some massage therapists have undertaken specialist oncology massage training. Go to www.oncologymassagetraining.com.au to find one near you.

Research into massage for people with cancer

- Several clinical studies show that massage can reduce symptoms such as stress, nausea, pain, fatigue and depression.
- A systematic review¹ of studies on aromatherapy and massage for relieving symptoms in people with cancer looked at 10 studies including eight randomised controlled trials. It found that massage consistently reduced anxiety and depression. Massage also helped lower nausea and pain, but not as consistently.
- A large American study² published in 2004 looked at the effects of massage therapy on almost 1300 people with cancer over three years. People in hospital had a 20-minute massage, and people treated as outpatients had a 60-minute session. The study found that overall, massage therapy reduced pain, nausea, fatigue, anxiety and depression. The benefits lasted longer in the patients who had the 60-minute session.
- Another American study³ of 39 people looked at the safety and effectiveness of massage in reducing stress hormone levels in patients with blood cancer. It randomised people to receive aromatherapy, massage or rest. The study concluded that massage significantly reduced the stress hormone.

¹ Fellowes D, Barnes K, Wilkinson SSM. *Aromatherapy and massage for symptoms relief in patients with cancer. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2008, Iss 4.*

² Cassileth BR, Vickers AJ. *Massage therapy for symptom control: outcome study at a major cancer centre. J Pain Symptom Manage 2004 Sep; 28 (3): 244–9.*

³ Stringer J et al. *Massage in patients undergoing intensive chemotherapy reduces serum cortisol and prolactin. Psycho-Oncology 2008 Oct; 17 (10): 1024–31.*



Key points

- Massage is a type of complementary therapy.
- Massage works by using rubbing or stroking to move muscles and soft tissues of the body.
- While massage doesn't treat cancer, it may help reduce the side effects of conventional treatments and improve quality of life.
- Some of the benefits of massage include reducing pain, fatigue, nausea, anxiety and depression. It may also help manage the symptoms of lymphoedema.
- Some of the reasons people with cancer have massages include making them feel whole again, helping them share feelings in an informal setting, re-establishing a positive body image and rebuilding hope.
- Research shows that massage doesn't spread cancer.
- Massage can be safely given to people with any stage of cancer, although some adjustments may be needed.
- Massage can be done by a professional massage therapist or by family and friends.
- Some massage therapists have undertaken specialist oncology massage training. See page 13.
- If you have any concerns regarding massage consult your doctor or health care provider.



Types of massage and touch therapies

There are many different types of massage therapy, and it's important to choose the right massage for your needs.

The style used for people with cancer or recovering from it will depend on the treatment they're having.

Massage styles

acupressure

Pressure points on the body are massaged to change the flow of energy in the body and relieve physical symptoms in different organs.

aromatherapy

Aromatic essential oils made from selected flowers and plants are blended and applied to the skin during a massage to help release stress and tension.

lomi lomi or ka huna massage

Hawaiian style of massage that uses large, broad movements to stimulate the flow of energy and help release stress and tension.

manual lymphatic drainage

Gentle strokes that stimulate the movement of lymphatic fluid.

myofascial release

Gentle sustained pressure and strokes to soft tissue to help relieve pain and restore motion.

Most commonly, soft and gentle styles are recommended.
Regardless of the massage style used, it will be adapted for you.

““ Massage, for me, makes an unbearable day bearable. ”” *Melissa*

reflexology	The feet and hands are stimulated in specific areas (reflex points) that correspond to other parts of the body.
seated chair massage	Massage is focused on the head, neck, shoulders, back and arms to release stress and tension.
shiatsu	Pressure points are massaged lightly with the fingers, thumbs, elbows, knees, hands and feet to improve circulation and restore energy.
Swedish massage	Long, flowing strokes tone soft tissues, stimulate circulation, improve oxygen flow and relax muscles. It is the most common massage style.
trigger point therapy	Specific points in the soft tissue of the body are compressed and stretched to reduce muscular pain.

Other touch therapies

Personal accounts from people with cancer suggest that these gentle styles of touch may help promote relaxation and reduce pain.

Bowen therapy	Through gentle touching and the movement of soft tissue and muscles, the body feels deeply relaxed.
craniosacral therapy	Gently releases tension from the soft tissue of the head, spine and pelvis, aiming to improve overall wellbeing.
healing touch	The therapist's hands softly touch the body to help restore an inner feeling of harmony, balance and wellbeing.
jin shin jyutsu	Fingertips or hands are placed on key parts of the body and special breathing techniques help restore the body's energy.
polarity therapy	Gently touching and rocking the body, and stretching or rotating the legs, can lead to deep relaxation and improved wellbeing.
reiki	The hands are gently placed in different positions along the body or slightly above the body, which can be calming and relaxing. Because of the limited touch involved this is sometimes considered an energy therapy.
therapeutic touch	Soothing, rhythmic movements along the body promote peacefulness and relaxation by restoring the body's energy.



Having a professional massage

Choosing a massage therapist

It is recommended that you choose a therapist who is a member of a professional massage association (see page 29 for details). These associations ensure that members have received adequate training in massage, undertake continuing professional education, and have a current first-aid certificate and professional indemnity insurance. Ideally a therapist has at least a Diploma of Massage or equivalent.

Oncology massage therapists

Some massage therapists have undertaken specialist training in massage for cancer (oncology massage). To find a local oncology massage therapist see www.oncologymassagetraining.com.au and enter your postcode in the 'Find Your Nearest Therapist' box.

Ask a potential massage therapist about their training and experience, and whether they've worked with people who have cancer. Other questions include:

- Do you have any specialist oncology massage training?
- What certification do you hold as a massage therapist?
- What types of massage or touch therapies have you been trained in? (See pages 10–12 for a list of different therapies.)
- What modifications would you make for me?
- What type of clients do you most often work with?
(Ideally they are people who require special adjustments such as infants, the elderly, or those with a serious illness.)
- Are you able to treat me at home if I am unwell?

- Would you be able to liaise with my doctors or other health professionals, if needed?
- What is the cost?
- Are your services covered by my health fund?

Discussing your medical history

It is important to talk about your medical history with your massage therapist, even if the massage is part of a beauty routine such as a facial or pedicure. This will help the therapist make the right adjustments to the session so that it's safe and comfortable. The therapist may need to decrease the pressure of their strokes and avoid areas affected by cancer.

Give your therapist information

Let the therapist know if you have any of the following symptoms or side effects from treatment:

- fatigue
- easy bruising or bleeding
- low white blood cell count
- recent blood clot
- oedema or lymphoedema
- nausea
- pain
- incisions or scars from surgery
- neuropathy
- sensitivity to certain scents or smells
- skin conditions such as rashes, inflammation, broken areas of skin, or fungal infections
- medical devices such as a catheter or stoma bag
- cancer in the bones, or fragile bones as a result of osteoporosis.



Most professional massage sessions last 30–60 minutes and cost \$60–\$80 per hour. Prices vary, depending on the therapist’s location, training, experience and style of massage being used. If you have private health insurance, check with your fund whether you’re eligible for a rebate.

Setting the scene

Massage usually occurs in a warm, quiet room. It can be given either while you lie on a massage table or sit in a chair. It can involve only part of the body or the whole body. You can have a massage while you’re fully clothed or directly on the skin. If you have undressed, only the area being worked on will be exposed. The other parts of your body will be covered by a towel or blanket.

The therapist may place pillows under different parts of your body so they’re supported. Let the therapist know if you need anything relevant to the session such as a change in pressure or another blanket. You may like to close your eyes during the massage.

Taking it slowly

When starting a massage program, it’s important for the therapist to begin with moderately light pressure. The therapist should consider your state of health at the time and your recent treatments.

Judge the effects of the session not only by how the massage feels while you’re having it, but by how you feel 24 hours afterwards. While a massage may feel comfortable at the time, a few hours

later or the next day you may feel light-headed, tired or in pain, even if the pressure was light. Massage related soreness should subside within 48 hours. If the symptoms persist consult your doctor. If you do not feel any side effects from the massage and want to increase the pressure of the strokes at your next session, ask the massage therapist to do so gradually until you find the right level of pressure for you.

Feeling safe

You should feel safe, respected and comfortable during a massage. Communicate your needs to the therapist (e.g. let them know if their pressure is too strong or if you're feeling cold). If you feel uncomfortable for any reason, or the therapist is unable to make the adjustments you have requested, ask them to stop the session.

tips

- Talk to your doctor before having a massage.
- A letter from your oncologist outlining your diagnosis and treatment will help your massage therapist develop an appropriate treatment plan.
- Tell the therapist if something hurts or causes discomfort, or if there's a certain area that shouldn't be massaged.
- Choose a massage time that suits you. You may find it helpful to have the massage before your pain becomes severe or you get tired.
- Tell the therapist if you are sensitive to any lotions, oils or scents.
- Record how the massage feels in a journal or pain diary.



Making the right adjustments

Cancer treatments can be demanding on the body. Massage during treatment and recovery may lift your mood, and offer comfort and support. However, a person having chemotherapy or radiotherapy needs a different type of massage to an athlete. The therapist will need to adjust the pressure and speed of strokes.

Most people with cancer can enjoy the benefits of a massage that has been adapted to suit their needs. After a massage people say they feel relaxed, more energetic and nurtured.

Adjustments for different treatments

Chemotherapy – This drug treatment affects the whole body. If you have a chemotherapy port, massage should not be done in this area. Some people who have chemotherapy experience tingling in their hands or feet, and may find they bruise or bleed easily. Massage should be light with no pressure on the areas that are affected.

Radiotherapy – The skin may be sensitive to touch after radiotherapy treatment. It may look red and appear sunburnt. If you are having radiotherapy, you should avoid massage to the treated area as you may find even light touch uncomfortable. Massage oils may make already irritated skin feel worse.

Surgery – Recovery after surgery takes time, and it's important to avoid massaging the area of the operation. However, you may wish to massage other areas of the body. Gentle 'lotioning' massage with soft hands or gently holding other areas can provide comfort and support.

tip

After surgery, seek advice from a therapist who has been specially trained in massaging scarred tissue. See page 13.

Adjustments for people after cancer treatment

Ask your therapist to use less pressure in areas where you are still experiencing discomfort. Eventually, you may be able to try more firm types of massage, but some conditions, listed below, will require adjustments to the massage technique for a long period of time.

Risk of lymphoedema – If you've had lymph nodes removed from the neck, armpit or groin during diagnosis or treatment, or if you've had radiotherapy to these areas, you should only have a very gentle massage in that area of the body. Massage needs to be light, and ideally is part of a manual lymphatic drainage or total lymphatic drainage treatment.

Therapists not trained in these techniques should avoid the affected area. To find a registered lymphoedema practitioner, see www.lymphoedema.org.au.

Bone fragility – Some treatments, such as radiation or medications, or the disease itself, may cause the bones to become more fragile. Care should be taken to avoid undue pressure.

Neuropathy – Certain chemotherapy drugs can cause long-term numbness in the hands and feet. A lighter pressure is best for those areas.

“ Having regular massage with a lymphoedema practitioner means that someone else is keeping an objective eye on my lymphatic arm to assess changes. It’s also helped me maintain my mobility and flexibility, and relieved discomfort and tightness. ” *Lilly*

Massage for children

Many parents are interested in how massage might help their child during treatment or recovery. If you have a child with cancer, you may want to learn some simple massage techniques as a way of being actively involved in their care.

How to prepare a child for a massage

- Reassure your child that massage is safe and won't hurt them.
- Explain or demonstrate the massage technique on yourself or your child before the massage session begins.
- Allow your child to feel and smell the oil.
- Ask your child if they'd like the lights dimmed or soothing music played during the session.
- Let your child know they can stop the massage at anytime if they feel uncomfortable or don't want to be touched in a particular way.
- Parents can remain in a massage session with their child, though an older child might prefer to be alone. Ask what suits them.

Adjustments for the end of life

Providing touch during the last stages of life can offer comfort and let someone know they're important and loved. It can also be a way of spending quiet time together in a pleasurable and undemanding way. Receiving a massage during palliative care may reduce the person's pain and they may need fewer medications. Some people worry that having a massage during this time may relax them too deeply and they may let go and pass away. They and their family may need to be reassured that this is unlikely to happen.

A massage therapist or family members or friends can provide the massage. Having a professional massage may give family members and friends the opportunity to rest, eat or go for walk. Some people want a full-body massage, while others may want only parts of the body massaged or to just have their hand held. At the end of life, just holding a person's hand can bring comfort.

tips

- Follow the lead of the person having the massage. Any signs that they don't want to be massaged must be respected. Sometimes they may just want company rather than a massage.
- Give the person choices. This will help them feel more in control of an uncontrollable situation.
- Allow the person to do what she or he can do for themselves.
- Teach the family or friends how to provide a gentle foot or hand massage.



Key points

- With the right adjustments most people with cancer can enjoy the benefits of massage therapy.
- After a massage that has been adjusted to suit you, you will probably feel relaxed, more energetic and nurtured.
- If you have a port in place to receive chemotherapy, the therapist should avoid areas close to the port.
- After radiotherapy treatment you may find your skin looks red and is sensitive to touch. You may find even a light touch on the treatment area uncomfortable.
- While you are recovering from surgery, a massage therapist can hold or stroke areas away from the wound with soft hands.
- If you've had lymph nodes removed, you may be at risk of lymphoedema. Massage needs to be very light. Ask if you can have a manual or total lymphatic drainage treatment.
- Children with cancer can also benefit from a massage during treatment or recovery. Parents may want to learn some simple massage techniques as a way of being involved in their child's care.
- Touch during the last stages of life can be comforting.
- Receiving a massage during palliative care may reduce the person's pain and need for medications.
- Family and friends can give a massage but should always follow the lead of the patient.



Simple massage at home

Family and friends often want to do something useful for you. One way they can help is by giving you a simple, gentle massage. This can bring comfort to both people and be a way of showing love and acceptance.

Preparing for a massage

It's a good idea to prepare yourself and the place where the massage will take place before you begin.

- Make sure the room is a comfortable temperature. You may want to have a blanket nearby in case you get cold.
- Choose a comfortable position. You may want to lie down or sit in a chair. Pillows under the knees, feet or tummy may help you feel relaxed.
- Ask family and friends to remove their jewellery and cut their nails before they touch you to avoid causing you discomfort.
- Pick a time that suits you. You may want to have the massage before pain becomes severe or you feel tired. The length of a massage session can vary – any duration from a few minutes here and there to a planned half-hour can help.
- Use lotion or oil during a massage to help keep the movement smooth and minimise irritation or discomfort. Warm the lotion or oil by rubbing it in your hands. Don't use oil just prior to having radiotherapy.

- Remove clothing from the area to be massaged if this is more comfortable or remain clothed if you prefer.
- Let the person giving the massage know how the massage makes you feel. If you feel pain or discomfort, ask them for gentler pressure or to change the area of massage. They must also make the same adjustments that a professional would by reducing their pressure, the direction of the strokes and the speed of the massage strokes.
- Keep a record of the massage and how it made you feel in a journal or pain diary. This may help you to give useful feedback to the therapist on your next visit.

Massage makes a difference

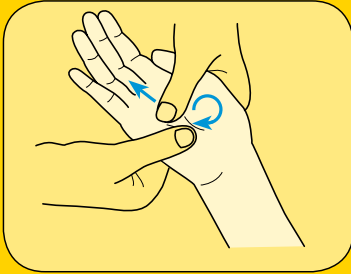
Providing there are no skin issues, blood clots or medical devices in the arm you can do a hand massage anywhere – at home while watching TV, lying in a bed or sitting in a waiting room.

See the following pages for some instructions on simple massage techniques you can use at home.

For more detailed instructions on how to provide a simple massage at home:

- speak to a massage therapist
- source massage books at your local library, bookstore or online bookstore.

Massage techniques



Hand massage

Apply lotion to the hand and with your thumbs resting gently on the palm of the hand, apply circular motion to the palm of the hand and then apply a comfortable pressure up along each of the fingers.



Head and ear massage

Applying pressure to the head and ear area is calming, reduces pain and may help with sleep.

Sit down for this massage – or do it yourself.

Using moderate pressure, gently rotate fingertips all around the crown of your head. Move to the top of the ears, gently rubbing them between the thumb and forefinger, down to the lobes. Work the fingers behind the ears and across the back of the skull.



Foot massage

Apply lotion to the feet with slow strokes using full-hand contact. Rest one foot between the hands and apply moderate pressure with the thumbs along the sole of the foot.



Back massage

Apply lotion to the back using long, slow strokes with full-hand contact. Gently squeeze muscles with moderate and controlled pressure along the length of the back. You may prefer to lie on your side rather than face down for this massage.

“Massage gave me something to look forward to during a very bleak time.”  Nathan

Self-help with acupressure

Acupressure is similar to acupuncture – without the needles – and it is easy to do yourself. Pressure points on the body correspond to different organs. Massaging these points gently can help relieve a variety of symptoms. Focus on each point for a few minutes using a soft touch and repeat on both sides of the body.

Xiphoid process – The area at the lower end of the breastbone (sternum) is called the xiphoid process. Gently circling the fingers on the xiphoid process is calming for many people.

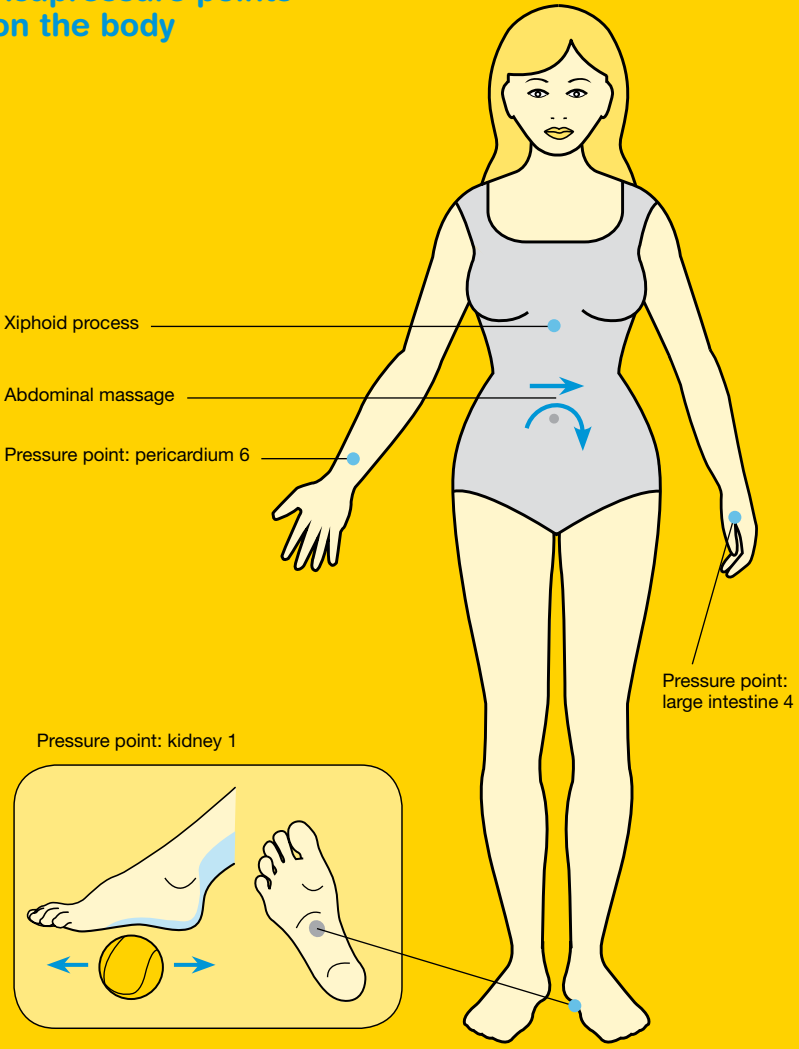
Abdominal massage – Apply lotion to the whole abdomen gently, in a clockwise direction. Also circle the fingers around the bellybutton. This soothes the entire body.

Pressure point: pericardium 6 – This point is in between the ligaments (fibrous tissue) of the wrist. Measure three finger widths from the base of the palm. Hold the point with moderate pressure for several minutes or apply small circular strokes with firm pressure. This helps reduce nausea, pain, anxiety, insomnia and breathing difficulties.

Pressure point: large intestine 4 – Massage the muscle between the thumb and forefinger to help stimulate intestinal activity, and possibly ease constipation.

Pressure point: kidney 1 – Located in the middle of the foot. To massage this point, roll the arch of the foot or entire foot over a tennis ball on the floor. This can increase energy and reduce anxiety.

Acupressure points on the body





Key points

- Family and friends can help by giving you a simple, gentle massage.
- The timing of the massage is important. Pick a time of day that suits you (e.g. before you feel too tired).
- There are many different types of massage techniques your family and friends can try at home: hand, head and ear, foot or back.
- Before you have a massage, make sure the room is a comfortable temperature and choose a comfortable position. You may want to ask the person massaging you to remove their jewellery or cut their nails to avoid causing you discomfort.
- Talk to the person giving the massage. Let them know what feels good and what feels uncomfortable so that they can make adjustments.
- Suggest they use lotion or oil during the massage to help keep the movements smooth.
- You can also try massaging some pressure points on yourself. The different pressure points correspond to different organs. Massaging these points gently can help relieve a variety of symptoms, such as nausea, pain, anxiety, insomnia, breathing difficulties and constipation.



Finding a professional massage therapist

To find a qualified massage therapist, contact one of the professional massage organisations listed below and ask for a list of therapists in your area. If you need treatment for lymphoedema symptoms see a therapist trained in lymphatic drainage. Visit the Lymphoedema Practitioners' Register website at www.lymphoedema.org.au to find a qualified therapist.

See page 13–14 for a list of questions to ask a potential therapist.

Organisation	Contact details
Association of Massage Therapists	02 9211 2441 www.amt.org.au
Australian Association of Massage Therapists	1300 138 872 http://aamt.com.au
Australian Natural Therapists Association	1800 817 577 www.anta.com.au
Australian Traditional Medicine Society	1800 456 855 www.atms.com.au
Bowen Association of Australia	1300 780 638 www.bowen.org.au
Bowen Therapists Federation of Australia	1300 426 936 www.bowen.asn.au
Oncology Massage Training	www.oncologymassagetraining.com.au
Reflexology Association of Australia	1300 733 711 www.reflexology.org.au



Seeking support

Coping with cancer isn't something you have to do alone. Getting in touch with other people who have been through a similar experience can be beneficial. There are many ways to contact others for mutual support and to share information. These include:

- **face-to-face support groups** – often held in community centres or hospitals
- **telephone support groups** – facilitated by trained counsellors
- **peer support programs** – match you with someone who has had a similar cancer experience, e.g. Cancer Connect
- **online forums** – such as www.cancerconnections.com.au.

In these support settings, most people feel they can speak openly, share tips with others, and just be themselves. You may find you feel comfortable talking about any post-treatment issues you are experiencing.

Ask your nurse or social worker to tell you about support groups in your area. Call the Helpline to access the Cancer Services Directory and find out how you can connect with others.

Joining a consumer advocacy group can also be rewarding for people who want to use their experience to make a difference for others. Visit www.cancervoices.org.au for more information.



Caring for someone with cancer

You may be reading this booklet because you are caring for someone with cancer. Being a carer can be stressful and cause you much anxiety. Try to look after yourself – give yourself some time out and share your worries and concerns with somebody neutral such as a counsellor or your doctor.

Many cancer support groups and cancer education programs are open to carers, as well as people with cancer. Support groups and programs can offer valuable opportunities to share experiences and ways of coping.

Support services such as Home Help, Meals on Wheels or visiting nurses can help you in your caring role. There are also many groups and organisations that can provide you with information and support, such as Carers Australia, the national body representing carers in Australia. Carers Australia works with the Carers Associations in each of the states and territories. Phone 1800 242 636 or visit www.carersaustralia.com.au for more information and resources.

You can also call Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20 to find out more about carers' services and get a copy of the *Caring for Someone with Cancer* booklet.

Carers can try acupressure on themselves or the person with cancer. See pages 26–27 for instructions.





Useful websites

The internet has many useful resources, although not all websites are reliable. The websites listed below are good sources of support and information.

Australian

Cancer Council Australia www.cancer.org.au
Cancer Australia <http://canceraustralia.gov.au>
Carers Australia www.carersaustralia.com.au
Department of Health www.health.gov.au
healthdirect Australia www.healthdirect.gov.au
beyondblue www.beyondblue.org.au
Australian Lymphology Association www.lymphoedema.org.au

International

Macmillan Cancer Support www.macmillan.org.uk
Cancer Research UK www.cancerresearch.org.uk
American Cancer Society www.cancer.org
US National Cancer Institute www.cancer.gov
Society for Oncology Massage www.s4om.org



Question checklist

You might find this checklist helpful when thinking about the questions you want to ask your doctor about massage. If your doctor gives you answers you don't understand, it is okay to ask for clarification.

- Are there any types of massage or touch-based therapies that would benefit me?
- Are there any types of massage or touch-based therapies I shouldn't have?
- Can you provide me with a letter giving your approval for me to have massage?
- Are there any areas on my body where the massage therapist needs to take special care?
- Can the treatment/tumour area be touched or should it be avoided altogether?
- Can you recommend a therapist in my area?



Glossary

acupressure

An ancient technique that is similar to acupuncture but uses non-invasive pressure on specific points in the body to unblock energy and restore health.

aromatherapy

The use of essential oils extracted from plants to improve mood, physical symptoms and general wellbeing.

base oil

An oil used in massage or aromatherapy that allows the massage therapist to work over the skin easily. Base oils can be applied directly to the skin. Also called a carrier oil.

body-based practices

A range of therapies that involve touching the body or the energy field surrounding the body. Also called bodywork.

Bowen therapy

A non-invasive bodywork technique in which the therapist's hands touch the body lightly but with precise movements to help it re-set and rebalance itself. This promotes pain relief.

complementary therapies

Supportive treatments that are used in conjunction with conventional treatment. They may improve general health, wellbeing and quality of life, and help people cope with side effects of cancer.

conventional cancer treatments

Commonly used, scientifically validated treatments for cancer, including surgery, chemotherapy,

radiotherapy, hormone therapy, immunotherapy and pharmaceutical medications.

energy therapies

Therapies based on the concept of energy or vital force surrounding or running through the body.

healing touch

A gentle bodywork technique in which soft touch helps to restore harmony and balance by working with the flow of energy in the body.

immune system

A network of cells and organs that defends the body against attacks by foreign invaders, such as bacteria and viruses.

lymphatic fluid

A clear fluid that circulates around the body through the lymphatic system, carrying cells that fight infection. Also called lymph.

lymphatic system

A network of tissues, capillaries, vessels, ducts and nodes that removes excess fluid from tissues, absorbs fatty acids and transports fat, and produces immune cells.

lymphoedema

Swelling caused by a build-up of lymph fluid. This happens when lymph vessels or nodes don't drain properly.

manual lymphatic drainage

A type of specialised massage in

which therapists help to reduce the swelling caused by lymphoedema by manually stimulating the flow of lymph.

massage

A type of bodywork therapy in which muscles are stimulated, stretched and relaxed through specialised pressure and strokes.

massage therapist

A person who practices therapeutic massage. They may be a member of a professional massage association, and can practice independently or in a medical setting.

metastasis

A cancer that has spread from where it started in the body to another part of the body. Also called secondary cancer.

neuropathy

Damage to the nerves. Symptoms include numbness, tingling, weakness and discomfort in the feet or hands. Can be caused by certain chemotherapy drugs.

oedema

The presence of an excessive amount of fluid around the cells or tissues of the body.

oncology massage training

Specialist training for massage therapists to develop their awareness and expertise to modify conventional massage for someone with a history or diagnosis of cancer.

pressure points

Areas on the body that correspond to different organs and may offer relief from a variety of symptoms.

randomised controlled trial

A clinical trial in which participants are randomly allocated to receive the new treatment or the standard treatment (the control).

reflexology

A type of complementary therapy. The therapist stimulates specific points (reflex points) on the feet or hands using gentle pressure. This is said to support the body's natural healing processes and improve wellbeing.

side effects

Unintended effect of a drug or treatment.

soft tissue techniques

A range of manual therapy techniques directed towards muscles and connective tissues in the body.

trigger point

A sensitive area of the body which when stimulated gives rise to a reaction elsewhere in the body.

Can't find what you're looking for?

For more cancer-related words, visit www.cancercouncil.com.au/words or www.cancervic.org.au/glossary.



How you can help

At Cancer Council we're dedicated to improving cancer control. As well as funding millions of dollars in cancer research every year, we advocate for the highest quality care for cancer patients and their families. We create cancer-smart communities by educating people about cancer, its prevention and early detection. We offer a range of practical and support services for people and families affected by cancer. All these programs would not be possible without community support, great and small.

Join a Cancer Council event: Join one of our community fundraising events such as Daffodil Day, Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, Relay For Life, Girls Night In and Pink Ribbon Day, or hold your own fundraiser or become a volunteer.

Make a donation: Any gift, large or small, makes a meaningful contribution to our work in supporting people with cancer and their families now and in the future.

Buy Cancer Council sun protection products: Every purchase helps you prevent cancer and contribute financially to our goals.

Help us speak out for a cancer-smart community: We are a leading advocate for cancer prevention and improved patient services. You can help us speak out on important cancer issues and help us improve cancer awareness by living and promoting a cancer-smart lifestyle.

Join a research study: Cancer Council funds and carries out research investigating the causes, management, outcomes and impacts of different cancers. You may be able to join a study.

To find out more about how you, your family and friends can help, please call your local Cancer Council.



Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20

Cancer Council Helpline is a telephone information service provided by Cancer Council NSW for people affected by cancer.

For the cost of a local call (except from mobiles), you can talk confidentially with oncology health professionals about any concerns. Helpline consultants can send you information and put you in touch with services in your area. If you need information in a language other than English, an interpreting service is available.

You can call the Helpline, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

If you have difficulty communicating over the phone, contact the National Relay Service (www.relayservice.com.au) to help you communicate with a Cancer Council Helpline consultant.

For more information, go to www.cancercouncil.com.au.

Regional offices

Central and Southern Sydney

Woolloomooloo
02 9334 1900

Hunter and Central Coast

Charlestown
02 4923 0700

North Sydney

Crows Nest
02 9334 1600

Northern

Byron Bay
02 6639 1300

Southern

North Wollongong
02 4223 0200

Western

Wagga Wagga
02 6937 2600

Western Sydney

Parramatta
02 9354 2000



Cancer Council
Helpline

13 11 20

For support and information on cancer and cancer-related issues, call Cancer Council Helpline. This is a confidential service.

For further information and details please visit our website: www.cancerCouncil.com.au