

Cancer Patients Turning to Massage Therapy

Cancer patients often find themselves suffering from a number of side effects related to their cancer treatment and wish to find a way to feel as normal as possible while fighting their cancer. Cancer treatments like chemotherapy and radiation therapy can leave patients feeling fatigued, in pain, and irritable. Many cancer patients are turning to complimentary therapies like massage to get some relief from cancer symptoms and treatment side effects.

What is massage therapy?

Massage has a long history of traditional use dating back thousands of years. It has been found to be very helpful in overcoming both physical and psychological health problems. Almost every country in the world practices massage therapy in one form or another. Research shows that massage can help people reduce anxiety, stress, and depression. It provokes the body into releasing chemicals like serotonin and dopamine, while reducing levels of stress hormones like cortisol. It also lowers levels of noradrenaline and adrenocorticotrophic hormone, two chemicals related to feelings of stress.

Can massage relieve my pain?

In many cases, massage therapy is very effective at reducing feelings of pain. It can trigger the release of chemicals called endorphins. These chemicals are molecules that have been found to control recurring pain, control cravings for addictive substances like alcohol and chocolate, regulate growth and sex hormone production, and reduce eating disorder symptoms. Endorphins also help boost the immune system. This is of special note to cancer patients since one's own body must ultimately defeat the cancer.

Can massage help alleviate my anxiety?

Massage therapy has been found to be beneficial in reducing levels of anxiety. The Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami studied the [effects of massage therapy](#) on depression and anxiety. They found that massage significantly reduced feelings of depression and anxiety in massaged people, but not for the non-massaged control group.

This study has been confirmed by other research. People who have chronic anxiety, muscle tension, and depression have been studied. These are people who have not responded to prescription medication for these conditions. They found that their symptoms were markedly reduced following massage therapy sessions.

Can massage therapy help with soreness and muscle tension?

Cancer patients, like those with [mesothelioma](#), often report treatment side effects like muscle soreness and tension. Massage therapy can be very helpful in this area. The massage therapist can apply gentle pressure to sore and tense areas, helping promote soothing feelings of relaxation in these muscles.

The endorphin release caused by massage therapy is also very helpful in reducing soreness, due to the pain relieving effects of these chemicals. The endorphins also tend to linger in the body for several hours following a massage therapy session, creating feelings of calm long after the session has ended.

Cancer patients should encourage their massage therapist to maintain close touch with their oncologist during massage treatments. This will ensure that nothing is done to jeopardize their traditional cancer treatment. The massage therapist also may need to be especially gentle with certain patients.

Consult your doctor and find a massage therapy that will work best for you and your treatment and give your body, mind and spirit a vacation from some of life's everyday stressors!

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I joined the Mesothelioma Cancer Alliance in 2011 as an awareness advocate for natural health and cancer cure initiatives. You will often find me highlighting the great benefits of alternative nutritional, emotional, and physical treatments on those diagnosed with cancer or other serious illness. I also assist in social media outreach in my efforts to spread awareness

