

Deep Tissue Massage

What is Deep Tissue Massage?

Deep Tissue Massage refers to massage techniques which engage the deeper muscle fibers of the body rather than just the superficial layers. Many areas of the body have multiple layers of muscle on top of each other. For example, the upper back contains superficial muscles such as the trapezius, then underneath that there are the erector spinae muscles and deeper there are the transverse spinalis muscles. Deep tissue techniques are designed to penetrate through the other muscles to access the deepest layers. Due to the depth of the muscles that are being worked, the massage generally needs to be performed much slower than the more superficial modalities.

Why would I get a Deep Tissue Massage?

There are many reasons why a person may opt to receive a deep tissue massage. Some people simply need a deeper massage to experience the benefits that they desire, while other people may not enjoy the discomfort of a deep tissue massage but may want to target the deeper muscles in order to help balance the posture of their body. If someone has been having massages regularly for some time, then they may need deeper work as they have already resolved a lot of the more superficial tension from their previous treatments. In this situation, the person may be quite familiar with massage and therefore be ready to experience some discomfort during a treatment in order to get the results they are looking for.

What Issues and Injuries is Deep Tissue helpful for?

People have reported benefits from Deep Tissue Massage for conditions such as neck, shoulder, and back pain, sciatica, sports injuries, tennis elbow, fibromyalgia, plantar fasciitis, etc. Recently a review of complementary and alternative health treatments was conducted in Australia which found moderate quality evidence that Massage can provide similar effects as over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medications for both acute and chronic low back pain. Massage has been a popular choice to address muscular pain and relieve the daily stresses and tensions that are put on the body for thousands of years and it doesn't appear that people are going to stop having massages any time soon.

Benefits of Deep Tissue Massage

- Treats Muscle Pain
- Lowers Blood Pressure
- Makes You More Flexible
- Helps Heals Injuries
- Detoxifies the Body
- Reduces Stress
- Promotes Sleep
- Break down scar tissue and eliminate "knots" or adhesions (bands of painful, rigid tissue)

- Improve circulation and limited range of motion
- Reduce inflammation of the muscles
- Improve postural problems
- Alleviate osteoarthritis pain

Is Deep Tissue Massage Always Painful?

No, deep tissue massage is not always painful. Lots of people really enjoy deep body work, but for some, there will be discomfort experienced during the treatment. It's important to understand that there is a difference between pain and this kind of discomfort. As your Massage Therapist is not psychic, it is crucial for you to communicate with them if you are experiencing discomfort that becomes intolerable. The therapist will check in with you throughout the treatment, but they cannot predict the changes you will experience as they move along your body. Some areas may elicit pain or intense discomfort at a slight touch whilst other areas may be worked into with a lot of force without any discomfort at all. Try not to feel inhibited in speaking with your therapist about what you are experiencing. They will be totally open to adapting the treatment to accommodate your wishes. Deep breaths help many people to unconsciously let go of tension they are carrying. This can also help with avoiding the tendency to tense up in reaction to the pressure that is being applied.

How is Deep Tissue Massage Perform?

Deep tissue employs the use of deeply applied pressure into the areas that are experiencing pain or dysfunction. High levels of pressure can alleviate muscle tissue that's become knotted and lacks sufficient blood flow. The pressure used in deep tissue massage is methodically applied. Massage therapists use their fingers, knuckles, forearms, and elbows to work through the body and reach the deeper tissues near the bone. Sometimes trigger point is applied to stubborn knots. When the massage begins, your massage therapist usually starts with lighter pressure to warm up your muscles and then works into deeper pressure.

During a relaxation massage you are likely to become relaxed and maybe fall asleep, but during a deep tissue massage you are unlikely to fall into this state due to the intensity of the treatment.

Are There Any Side Effects?

Depending on the intensity and duration of the Massage you may experience various effects for up to a week after your treatment, however, most of the effects will usually be experienced within 48 hours of the treatment. The most common symptom is soreness or tenderness in the areas that received the heaviest treatment. This discomfort is usually easy to identify as it feels different to the muscular pain that you were experiencing prior to having your treatment. This soreness will naturally fade within a few days so if your pain persists or worsens it is recommended that you consult with your General Practitioner or Physiotherapist. It's important to wait at least a few days to assess the effectiveness of the treatment as the initial soreness convinces some people that the massage has done some damage. This is unlikely to be the case so please be patient before you judge the outcome of your Deep Tissue session. You could also feel very relaxed, tired or fatigued after a treatment. This is normal and will usually be gone by the next morning.

Some side effects that could possibly occur

- Muscle Soreness and Fatigue
- Headache
- Sleepiness
- Inflammation
- Nausea
- Bruising
- Aggravate existing injuries

What to Do Before a Deep Tissue Massage?

Gather Health Information

Prepare relevant health information for the therapist. A deep tissue massage can be somewhat uncomfortable. If you have any pain in your body or injuries, this is information the therapist will need to know. Preparing the information ahead of time will ensure you do not forget anything when you are at your appointment. You may also choose to include information pertaining to any allergies you have or preferences on aromatherapy scents.

Hydrate Your Body

Drink water. Deep tissue massages are designed to break up knots and adjust your muscles. They also release toxins from the muscles, which might make you feel fatigued or nauseated after the massage. Staying well hydrated before and after the massage will help alleviate these symptoms.

Take a Warm Shower

Take a warm shower before the massage to loosen up your muscles and help put you in a relaxed state. A fresh, clean body will also make the experience more pleasant for your massage therapist.

Wear Comfortable Clothing

Wear loose, comfortable clothing to the massage appointment. This will help you continue to feel relaxed and make the process of undressing easier. You may also feel sore or tender following the massage, so loose clothing will be more comfortable to wear.

During The Massage

Communicate what you are feeling during the massage. The therapist may use various techniques to work deeper into the muscle and these may be uncomfortable, especially in areas where you have tight or knotted muscles or scar tissue. If the experience becomes too intense, be sure to tell your therapist.

Are there any Contraindications?

Yes, as with any form of massage, there are contraindications (reasons you should not have a massage). You should NOT have a deep tissue massage if you have any of the following conditions:

- Contagious diseases (including the common cold and influenza)
- Are under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Have had a recent surgery (within the last 6 months)
- Neuritis (nerve inflammation)
- Infectious skin disease
- Acute inflammation
- Bone and joint injuries
- Fever
- Open wounds
- Myositis Ossificans
- Deep-vein thrombosis
- Tumors
- Hemophilia
- Diabetes (seek permission from your GP)
- Bursitis
- Periostitis
- Muscle and/or Tendon Rupture
- Atherosclerosis

Some contraindications only apply to localized areas of your body. You may be able to have a deep tissue massage, but the therapist will need to avoid the area. Local contraindications include:

- Undiagnosed lumps and bumps
- Bruising and abrasions
- Burns including sunburn
- Pain without known cause
- Acute inflammation
- Varicose veins

What To Do After a Deep Tissue Massage

- Schedule a follow-up massage appointment ...
- Drink plenty of water after the massage ...
- Eat nutritious meals after the massage ...
- Avoid drinking alcohol and coffee ...
- Take a warm bath after the massage ...
- Relax and make sure you get enough sleep ...
- Avoid running or exercising immediately after the massage...
- Do some gentle stretching ...