



## Orthopedic Associates OF PORT HURON

### Therapeutic Massage

#### **What is Therapeutic Massage?**

Therapeutic massage involves the manipulation of the soft tissue structures of the body to prevent and alleviate pain, discomfort, muscle spasm and stress; and, to promote health and wellness. The American Massage Therapy Association defines massage therapy as a profession in which the practitioner applies manual techniques, and may apply adjunctive therapies, with the intention of positively affecting the health and well-being of the client.

Massage therapy improves functioning of the circulatory, lymphatic, muscular, skeletal, and nervous systems and may improve the rate at which the body recovers from injury and illness. Massage involves holding, causing movement of soft tissue, and/or applying pressure to the body. It comes in many forms, including:

- Swedish: a gentle, relaxing massage.
- Pressure point therapy: for a certain conditions or injuries; and
- Sports massage: which focuses on muscle groups relevant to the particular sport.

Although massage therapy does not increase muscle strength, it can stimulate weak, inactive muscles and, thus, partially compensate for the lack of exercise and inactivity resulting from illness or injury. It also can hasten and lead to a more complete recovery from exercise or injury.

#### ***Physical benefits of therapeutic massage***

- Helps relieve stress and aids relaxation
- Helps relieve muscle tension and stiffness
- Fosters faster healing of strained muscles and sprained ligaments; reduces pain and swelling, reduces formation of excessive scar tissue
- Reduces muscle spasms
- Provides greater joint flexibility and range of motion

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- Enhances athletic performance
- Promotes deeper and easier breathing
- Improves circulation of blood and movement of lymph fluids
- Reduces blood pressure
- Helps relieve tension-related headaches and effects of eye-strain
- Enhances the health and nourishment of skin
- Improves posture
- Strengthens the immune system

### ***Massage therapy and well-being: mental benefits***

- Fosters peace of mind
- Promotes a relaxed state of mental alertness
- Helps relieve mental stress
- Improves ability to monitor stress signals and respond appropriately
- Enhances capacity for calm thinking and creativity
- Satisfies needs for caring, nurturing touch
- Fosters a feeling of well-being
- Reduces levels of anxiety
- Increases awareness of mind-body connection

### ***What does research show about massage therapy?***

Among research findings so far:

- Office workers massaged regularly were more alert, performed better and were less stressed than those who were not massaged
- Massage therapy decreased the effects of anxiety, tension, depression, pain, and itching in burn patients
- Abdominal surgery patients recovered more quickly after massage
- Premature infants who were massaged gain more weight and fared better than those who were not massaged
- Autistic children showed less erratic behavior after massage therapy

Therapeutic massage may not be recommended in some cases, such as people with:

- Inflammation of the veins (phlebitis)
- Infectious diseases
- Certain forms of cancer
- Some skin conditions
- Some cardiac problems

If you have one of these or some other diagnosed medical condition, always check with your doctor before seeking a massage.

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