Should You Try Fibromyalgia Massage?

by ANGELA FINLAY

The Types of Fibromyalgia Massage to Avoid and to Receive

One of the main symptoms of fibromyalgia is extreme sensitivity to touch, so it's understandable that some people with fibromyalgia avoid getting massages. However, they are missing out on something great.

Massage might seem like the very opposite approach to take for fibromyalgia pain, but the right amount of pressure and manipulation can actually do a lot for your congested muscles and tissues. In reality, massage is a perfect natural remedy for fibromyalgia. Therapeutic kneading will stimulate blood flow, eliminate metabolic waste, and lengthen muscle fibers. The right massage for fibromyalgia will work within the limits of your condition to release pockets of tension, and improve your physical wellbeing and quality of life.

Best Types of Massage for Fibromyalgia Pain

There are many types of therapeutic massage, and the right style for your fibromyalgia pain will respect your muscle sensitivity and particular pain issues. Stick with these massage techniques for the most healing benefits:

- **Swedish massage techniques.** This classic relaxation technique — using the hands, arms or mechanical means — will gently manipulate tense muscles to relieve long-standing tension.
- **Myofascial release.** Focusing on the connective tissue called fascia, this technique aims to release pressure where the tissues connect to the bones. Muscles will relax and lengthen, leaving more space for the organs to expand.
- **Reflexology.** A safe and gentle approach that stimulates points on the hands and feet that are believed to be connected to various organs and tissues. This may help to relax certain areas that would be difficult to stimulate directly.
- **Cranial-sacral therapy (CST).** Using very mild pressure on strategic points at the base of the skull and along the length of the spine, the CST therapist can detect interruptions in the flow of spinal fluid, and improve the balance and function of every muscle area.

These Types of Massage May Not Be Good Choices for Fibromyalgia

The types of massage that are out of the question if you don’t like touch because of sensitivity include:

- **Thai massage.** It puts you through different poses for an entire hour.
- **Reflexology foot massage.** Presses on reflexology points that often hurt.
- **Barefoot massage.** The massage therapist walks on your back while holding onto a supportive rack suspended from the ceiling.
- **Rolfing/structural integration.** You’ll feel beat up with this one.

Take Precautions to Avoid Problems

At first, massage can be a bit uncomfortable on tender muscles, so have a discussion with your massage therapist before you begin treatment. Avoid injury and relapse with the right precautions:

- **Be specific.** Let the therapist know you suffer from fibromyalgia and describe your pain and symptoms, including the exact location of your sore spots. They may find those spots are cool to the touch, indicating oxygen insufficiency. They will then be able to focus their therapy more effectively.
- **Recognize impending flare-ups.** When symptoms intensify and new ones develop, your therapist will need to adapt their approach. Look out for muscle twitches, faltering strength, coolness in the extremities, and cloudy thinking — these are signs of flare-ups, and you should avoid deep tissue massage and neuromuscular therapy until symptoms calm down.
- **Rest afterwards.** Muscle responses are often delayed, so be prepared to rest for a while after your massage to let your muscles adapt and recover. If possible, find a therapist who will visit you at your home, so you won't have to get up, get dressed, and get into the car immediately following the session.
- **Rehydrate.** Whatever type of massage you get, there will be a certain level of detoxification going on, so you must drink a lot of water before and after your massage.

An intensive massage will not guarantee lasting relief, but regular massage therapy sessions can greatly reduce your chronic pain. If you find that massage is simply too expensive to keep up, invest in a mechanical massager you can use yourself, or teach your partner or a friend how to massage your sore points.