



**Cancer  
Council**

# 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](http://www.cancerCouncil.com.au)

## **Massage and Cancer**

A guide for people with cancer, their families and friends

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## **Note to reader**

Always consult your doctor before beginning any health treatment. This booklet is intended as a general introduction to the topic and should not be seen as a substitute for your doctor's or health professional's advice. However, you may wish to discuss issues raised in this booklet with them. All care is taken to ensure that the information in this booklet is accurate at the time of publication.

## **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](http://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 wonder whether any complementary therapies can help them.

Massage is a commonly used complementary therapy to provide relief from some symptoms of cancer. This gentle body-based practice focuses on the positive effects of human touch. 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.

## **How this booklet was developed**

The information in this booklet was developed with help from massage experts and people who have been diagnosed with cancer.

# Contents

<b>Touch therapies</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Touch through massage.....	4
<b>Key questions</b> .....	<b>5</b>
What is massage?.....	5
Where can I have a massage?.....	5
What are the benefits of massage?.....	6
Why do people with cancer use massage?.....	6
Is massage safe for people with cancer?.....	7
Key points.....	9
<b>Types of massage and touch therapies</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Massage styles.....	10
Other touch therapies.....	12
<b>Having a professional massage</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Choosing a massage therapist.....	13
Discussing your medical history.....	14
Setting the scene.....	15
Taking it slowly.....	15
Feeling safe.....	16
<b>Making the right adjustments</b> .....	<b>17</b>
Adjustments for different treatments.....	17
Adjustments for people after cancer treatment.....	18
Massage for children.....	19
Adjustments for end of life.....	20
Key points.....	21

<b>Massage at home</b> .....	<b>22</b>
Preparing for a massage .....	22
Massage techniques .....	24
Self-help with acupressure .....	26
Key points .....	28
<b>Finding a massage therapist</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>Seeking support</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Caring for someone with cancer</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>Useful websites</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>Cancer Council library</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b>Question checklist</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>Glossary</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>Notes</b> .....	<b>38</b>
<b>How you can help</b> .....	<b>40</b>



# Touch therapies

Touch is important for well-being. It helps people of all ages, from babies to the elderly, and on every level – 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 the client's body to provide relaxation or relief from physical and emotional symptoms. They are sometimes called touch, physical or manual therapies, 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 well-being. 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 moving (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.

### 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 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 massage therapist* on page 29 for more information.

## **Q: What are the benefits of massage?**

**A:** Scientific studies have been done to show 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.

Massage may also improve sleep, nerve damage (neuropathy), quality of life, and mental clarity and alertness. See page 8 for more information.

Another benefit of massage is reducing lymphoedema, which is swelling in the tissues caused by a build-up of fluid after surgery or radiotherapy to the lymph nodes. For more information see page 18.

## **Q: Why do people with cancer use massage?**

**A:** As well as improving physical symptoms, some people with cancer choose to have a massage because it:

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

## 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 too much pressure on the affected area and underlying organs. If you have any concerns, you can talk to your doctor or call the Cancer Council Helpline on 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 when we move: muscles contract and compress lymph vessels to force the movement of lymph.

Cancer may spread (metastasise) 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.

Research shows that massage does not spread cancer.



## 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 review<sup>1</sup> of the 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 study<sup>2</sup> published in 2004 looked at the effects of massage therapy on almost 1,300 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 study<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup>Fellows D, Barnes K, Wilkinson SSM. Aromatherapy and massage for symptoms relief in patients with cancer. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2008, Iss 4.

<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>3</sup>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, and one of the oldest healing techniques.
- 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 reduce 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.



# 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. Most commonly,

## Massage styles

<b>acupressure</b>	Pressure points on the body are massaged to change the flow of energy in the body and relieve physical symptoms in different organs.
<b>aromatherapy</b>	Aromatic essential oils made from selected flowers and plants are blended and applied to the skin during a massage to release stress and tension.
<b>lomi lomi or ka huna massage</b>	Hawaiian style of massage that uses large, broad movements to stimulate the flow of energy and release stress and tension.
<b>manual lymphatic drainage</b>	Gentle strokes that stimulate the movement of lymphatic fluid by cleansing inflammatory materials and toxins.
<b>myofascial release</b>	Gentle sustained pressure and strokes to soft tissue to eliminate pain and restore motion.

soft and gentle styles are recommended, rather than deep tissue massage.

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

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

<b>Bowen therapy</b>	Through gentle touching and the movement of soft tissue and muscles, the body feels deeply relaxed.
<b>craniosacral therapy</b>	Gently releases tension from the soft tissue of the head, spine and pelvis, improving overall well-being.
<b>healing touch</b>	The therapist's hands softly touch the body to help restore an inner feeling of harmony, balance and well-being.
<b>jīn shin jyutsu</b>	Fingertips or hands are placed on key parts of the body and special breathing techniques help restore the body's energy.
<b>polarity therapy</b>	Gently touching and rocking the body, and stretching or rotating the legs, leads to deep relaxation and improved well-being.
<b>reiki</b>	The hands are gently placed in different positions along the body or slightly above the body, which is calming and relaxing.
<b>therapeutic touch</b>	Soothing, rhythmic movements along the body promote peacefulness and relaxation by restoring the body's energy.



# Having a professional massage

Massage during treatment and recovery can lift your mood, and offer comfort and support.

## 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.

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

- 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.)
- Are you trained to work with someone with a history of cancer?
- What adjustments 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.)
- Would you be able to liaise with my doctors or other health professionals, if needed?
- Are you able to treat me at home if I am unwell?
- What is the cost? Are your services covered by my health fund?



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

## 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 to avoid areas affected by cancer.

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 from surgery
- neuropathy
- skin conditions such as rashes, 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.

## Setting the scene

Massage usually occurs in a warm, quiet room. It can be given either while you lie on a 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.

If you are able to have a table massage, the therapist may place pillows under different parts of your body so they are better supported. Many people close their eyes during a massage and let the therapist know if they need anything relevant to the session such as a change in pressure or another blanket.

## Taking it slowly

When starting a massage program, it's important for the therapist to begin with moderately light pressure.

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.

If you do not feel any side effects from the massage within 24 hours 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. It is important to communicate your needs to the therapist. For example, 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.
- Ask for a letter from your oncologist outlining your diagnosis and treatment. This will help your massage therapist develop an appropriate treatment plan for you.
- Choose a time for the massage that is best for you. You may find it helpful to have the massage before your pain becomes severe or you get tired.
- Tell the therapist if something hurts or causes discomfort. Let them know if there's a certain area that shouldn't be massaged.
- Record how the massage feels in a journal or pain management diary.



## Making the right adjustments

Cancer treatments can be demanding on the body. A person having chemotherapy or radiotherapy needs a different type of massage to a person who has just completed a triathlon. The therapist will need to adjust the pressure and speed of strokes.

With the right adjustments, most people with cancer can enjoy the benefits of a massage. After a massage that has been adapted to suit your needs, you will probably feel relaxed, more energetic and nurtured.

●● Having a regular massage 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 relieves discomfort and tightness. ●● *Patient*

### 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** – After radiotherapy treatment people may find their skin is sensitive to touch. It may look red and have a burnt appearance. 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** – Immediately after surgery, patients may be at risk of blood clots. While they recover, touching or holding the area or other parts of the body with soft hands can be helpful. Patients may feel tired for some time and will require a gentle approach.

## Adjustments for people after cancer treatment

Eventually, you may be able to return to more firm types of massage, but ask your therapist to use less pressure in any area where you are still experiencing discomfort. 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, 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 or only use very light touch. To find a registered lymphoedema practitioner, see [www.nlpr.asn.au](http://www.nlpr.asn.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 in those areas to avoid undue pressure.

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

## 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 the oil. They may want to smell it.
- 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 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. 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 just have their hand held. At the end of life, just holding a person's hand can bring comfort.

Receiving a massage during palliative care may reduce the person's pain and they may need fewer medications.

### tips

- Follow the lead of the patient. Any signs that they don't want to be massaged must be respected. Sometimes they may just want company rather than a massage.
- Allow the person to do what she or he can do for themselves.
- Give the patient choices. This will help them feel more in control of an uncontrollable situation.
- 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're receiving chemotherapy, the massage should avoid any areas with a 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 the area 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.



# 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

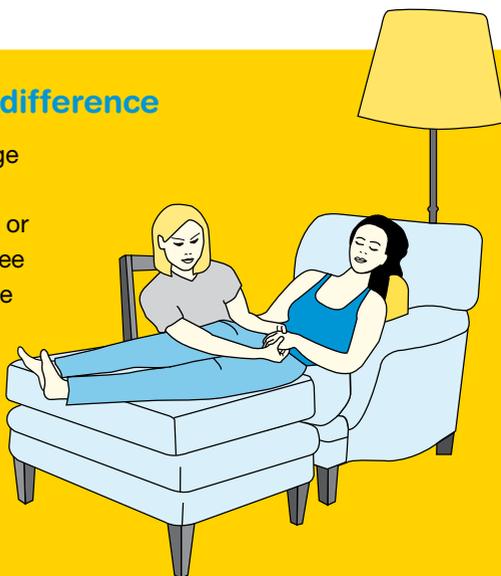
It's a good idea to prepare yourself and the place where the massage will take place before you begin.

- 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 (such as almond oil or apricot kernel oil) during a massage to help keep the movement smooth. A massage without lotion can cause irritation and discomfort. If lotion is used, warm it first by rubbing it in your hands.

- 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 and the speed of the massage strokes.
- Keep a record of the massage and how it made you feel in a journal or pain management log.

### Massage makes a difference

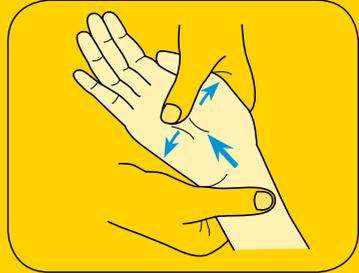
You can do a hand massage anywhere – at home while watching TV, lying in a bed or sitting in a waiting room. See the following page for some simple instructions.



## Massage techniques

### Hand massage

Apply lotion to the hand and with your thumb resting gently on the palm of the hand, press your fingers up into the palm, then squeeze and slide your fingers from the centre of the palm out to the edges.



### Head and ear massage

Applying pressure to these areas 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 tweaking 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.” *Patient*

## 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 on both sides of the body using a soft touch.

**Xiphoid process** – The space where the ribs meet at the breastbone 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 in a right-to-left 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. 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, possibly easing 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. Helps increase energy and reduce anxiety.

## Acupressure points on the body

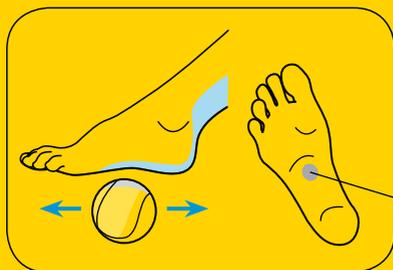
Xiphoid process

Abdominal massage

Pressure point: pericardium 6

Pressure point:  
large intestine 4

Pressure point: kidney 1





## Key points

- Family and friends can help by giving you a simple, gentle massage. as nausea, anxiety, pain, insomnia, breathing difficulties and constipation.
- 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 your caregiver to remove their jewellery or cut their nails to avoid causing you discomfort.
- Suggest they use lotion or oil during the massage to help keep the movement 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



## Finding a massage therapist

It's important that the person who gives you a massage is properly trained and qualified to treat you. To find a massage therapist, contact one of the professional massage organisations and ask for a list of therapists in your area. Their website may also have a search function.

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

Organisation	Contact details
Association of Massage Therapists	(02) 9517 9925 <a href="http://www.amt.org.au">www.amt.org.au</a>
Australian Association of Massage Therapists	1300 138 872 <a href="http://www.aamt.com.au">www.aamt.com.au</a>
Australian Natural Therapists Association	1800 817 577 <a href="http://www.anta.com.au">www.anta.com.au</a>
Australian Traditional-Medicine Society	(02) 9809 6800 <a href="http://www.atms.com.au">www.atms.com.au</a>
Bowen Therapists Federation of Australia	1300 426 936 <a href="http://www.bowen.asn.au">www.bowen.asn.au</a>
Oncology Massage Training	<a href="http://www.oncologymassagetraining.com.au">www.oncologymassagetraining.com.au</a>
Reflexology Association of Australia	1300 733 711 <a href="http://www.reflexology.org.au">www.reflexology.org.au</a>



# Seeking support

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

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](http://www.cancervoices.org.au) for more information.

## Support services available in your community

- **Face-to-face support groups** – often held in community centres or hospitals
- **Online discussion forums** – where people can connect with each other any time – see [www.cancerconnections.com.au](http://www.cancerconnections.com.au)
- **Telephone support groups** – for certain situations or types of cancer, which trained counsellors facilitate.



## 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. Try to look after yourself – give yourself some time out and consider getting a massage yourself. Sharing your worries and concerns with somebody neutral such as a counsellor or your doctor may help.

Many cancer support groups are open to carers as well as people with cancer. A support group can offer a valuable opportunity to share experiences and ways of coping. The online forum [www.cancerconnections.com.au](http://www.cancerconnections.com.au) has specific section for carers to connect with each other, ask questions and offer suggestions. You can also read other people's blogs or write your own.

Support services such as respite care, home help, meals on wheels or visiting nurses can help you in your caring role. There are also many organisations and groups that can provide you with information and support. To learn more, contact Carers Australia on 1800 242 636 or visit [www.carersaustralia.com.au](http://www.carersaustralia.com.au).

Call the Cancer Council Helpline to find out more about different services or to request free information for carers.

Carers can try self-help with acupuncture for themselves or the person with cancer. See page 26 for instructions.





# Useful websites

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

## Australian

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### Your local Cancer Council

Australian Capital Territory.....	<a href="http://www.actcancer.org">www.actcancer.org</a>
New South Wales.....	<a href="http://www.cancercouncil.com.au">www.cancercouncil.com.au</a>
Northern Territory.....	<a href="http://www.cancercouncilnt.com.au">www.cancercouncilnt.com.au</a>
Queensland.....	<a href="http://www.cancerqld.org.au">www.cancerqld.org.au</a>
South Australia.....	<a href="http://www.cancersa.org.au">www.cancersa.org.au</a>
Tasmania.....	<a href="http://www.cancertas.org.au">www.cancertas.org.au</a>
Victoria.....	<a href="http://www.cancervic.org.au">www.cancervic.org.au</a>
Western Australia.....	<a href="http://www.cancerwa.asn.au">www.cancerwa.asn.au</a>

### National websites

Cancer Council Australia.....	<a href="http://www.cancer.org.au">www.cancer.org.au</a>
Cancer Institute NSW.....	<a href="http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au">www.cancerinstitute.org.au</a>
Australian Government Dept of Health and Ageing.....	<a href="http://www.health.gov.au">www.health.gov.au</a>

### Massage websites

Australian Association of Massage Therapists.....	<a href="http://www.aamt.com.au">www.aamt.com.au</a>
Australian Natural Therapists Association.....	<a href="http://www.anta.com.au">www.anta.com.au</a>
Australian Traditional-Medicine Society.....	<a href="http://www.atms.com.au">www.atms.com.au</a>
Lymphoedema Association of Australia.....	<a href="http://www.lymphoedema.org.au">www.lymphoedema.org.au</a>
Oncology Massage Training.....	<a href="http://www.oncologymassagetraining.com.au">www.oncologymassagetraining.com.au</a>

## International

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- American Cancer Society..... **www.cancer.org**  
US National Cancer Institute..... **www.cancer.gov**  
Macmillan Cancer Support.....**www.macmillan.org.uk**  
Society for Oncology Massage ..... **www.s4om.org**

### Cancer Council library\*

Following a cancer diagnosis many people look for information about new types of treatment, the latest research findings and stories about how other people have coped. Cancer Council has a range of books, CDs, DVDs and medical journals that may be helpful for you. Your local library may also have some relevant resources.

*\*This service is not available in Victoria and Queensland*



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



# Glossary

You may come across new terms when reading this booklet or talking to health professionals. You can check the meaning of other health-related words on Cancer Council's website at [www.cancer council.com.au/words](http://www.cancer council.com.au/words).

## **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 well-being.

## **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 and inner healing.

## **complementary therapies**

Supportive treatments that are used in conjunction with conventional treatment. They may improve general health, well-being 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.

### **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 bodyworkers 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.

### **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 on the feet or hands using gentle pressure. This is said to support the body's natural healing processes and improve well-being.

### **side effects**

Unintended effect of a drug or treatment.







# How you can help

At Cancer Council we're dedicated to defeating cancer. As well as funding more cancer research than any other charity in the state, we advocate for the highest quality of care for cancer patients and their families, and create cancer-smart communities by empowering people with knowledge about cancer, its prevention and early detection. We also offer direct financial assistance for those people in hardship as a result of having cancer. These achievements would not be possible without community support, great and small.

**Join a Cancer Council event:** Join one of our community fundraising events like 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 donation, whether large or small, will make a meaningful contribution to our fight to defeat cancer.

**Buy sun protection products from our website or retail stores:** Every purchase helps you prevent cancer and contributes financially to our work.

**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 cancer issues and help us defeat cancer by living and promoting a cancer-smart lifestyle.

**Join a research study:** Cancer Council does research to investigate the causes, management, outcomes and impacts of different cancer types.

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



# Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20

The 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 about any concerns confidentially with oncology health professionals. 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](http://www.relayservice.com.au)). This service will help you communicate with a Cancer Council Helpline consultant.

## Regional offices

### **Central and Southern Sydney Region**

Woolloomooloo  
Ph: (02) 9334 1900

### **Central Coast Region**

Erina  
Ph: (02) 4336 4500

### **Far North Coast Region**

Alstonville  
Ph: (02) 6627 0300

### **Hunter Region**

Broadmeadow  
Ph: (02) 4923 0700

### **Mid North Coast Region**

Coffs Harbour  
Ph: (02) 6659 8400

### **North West Region**

Tamworth  
Ph: (02) 6763 0900

### **Northern Sydney Region**

Crows Nest  
Ph: (02) 9334 1600

### **South West Region**

Wagga Wagga  
Ph: (02) 6937 2600

### **Southern Region**

North Wollongong  
Ph: (02) 4223 0200

### **Western Region**

Orange  
Ph: (02) 6392 0800

### **Western Sydney Region**

Parramatta  
Ph: (02) 9354 2000

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

For further information and details please visit our website: [www.cancercouncil.com.au](http://www.cancercouncil.com.au)



Cancer Council  
**Helpline**

**13 11 20**