

Tips for Enjoying Your Massage

By Anitra Brown, About.com

A massage is supposed to be a soothing, relaxing experience. So why do so many people arrive at 1:30 for a 1:30 massage? And if you arrive late, in a frenzied state, you might as well have not come. Get there early is the most important tip for enjoying your massage. But there are plenty more. (Hint -- don't eat a big sausage sub right before you get there, and be sure to speak up if you don't like the pressure.

Here are some tips adapted from the American Massage Therapy Association to help you enjoy your massage.

- * Be receptive. Don't eat just before a massage session.
- * Be on time. If you arrive in a frenzied, rushed state, it will take longer to relax.
- * If you don't want to remove all your clothing, discuss it with the therapist. Wear what you will be comfortable in that will allow the therapist to work on the areas of your body that need it.
- * Good communication is very important. Before the session, give accurate health information and let the massage therapist know what you want from the massage. During the massage session, Speak up if you have any feedback on the amount of pressure, speed of movement, room temperature, music volume, or lighting.
- * Some people like to talk during a massage session, while others remain silent. In general you should do whatever you feel like, and the massage therapist will follow your lead.
- * Breathing helps to facilitate relaxation. People often stop breathing when they feel anxious or a sensitive area is massaged. If you realize this is happening, remind yourself to breath.
- * Try not to tighten up during the massage. Let your massage therapist know if this is happening. They may need to adjust the massage technique being used. They may also be able to help you relax the affected area.
- * If you find your thoughts are racing during the massage, one way to be more "body-centered" and to quiet the mind is to follow the hands of the massage therapist and focus on how the touch feels.
- * If anything happens during the massage that you dislike or seems improper, you have the right to ask the massage therapist to stop. If necessary, you also have the right to end the session.
- * If you are dizzy or light headed after the massage, do not get off the table too fast.
- * Drink extra water after a massage.
- * Allow for some open, quiet time after your massage session if possible. Sometimes one needs a little time to integrate or absorb the results of the massage session or needs some "re-entry" time.

Remember, massage has its greatest benefits over time. The therapeutic effects of massage are cumulative, so the more often a person gets a massage, the better he or she will feel and the more quickly one's body will respond. If you are getting massage to address chronic muscular tension or recovery from a soft tissue injury, more than one session is usually needed, so be prepared to schedule several sessions.

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