

What is Swedish Massage?

Swedish massage is the most common kind of massage requested to increase relaxation and reduce stress. In this particular method, the massage therapist uses either lotion or oil along with a variety of basic strokes that are applied with light to medium pressure. Usually, the pressure depends on the client's preference. The therapist will determine the stroke sequence that will work best for each client.

The kinds of strokes used are based upon the client's needs. Often, the therapist will start out with general, broad strokes and eventually transitioning to more detail specific strokes to work out tension in problem areas. The massage usually finishes with broad, connecting strokes that induce relaxation.

There are some particular basic stroke techniques that characterize Swedish Massage. These strokes include: vibration, friction, effleurage, tapotement and petrissage.

1. Effleurage

Effleurage consists of long, sweeping, gliding strokes that are administered with forearms, hands, fists, and palms. These smoothing strokes are used to spread the oil or the lotion on the body. It is during this application process the therapist can evaluate muscle tension. As the stroke pressure increases, these movements provide a stretch to the muscles and the client can enjoy a relaxed and soothing state.

2. Petrissage

Petrissage technique is characterized by rolling, kneading, lifting and wringing strokes. These kinds of motions help to loosen bound soft tissue and knotted muscles. As well, this technique increases circulation and stimulates nerve endings. These actions in turn help promote cell regeneration and repair.

3. Friction

Friction is a warming stroke. It is designed to generate heat quickly, in preparation for deeper work. As well, friction is an effective way to drive the healing and therapeutic properties of plant-based essential oils into the body. This stroke can be done by rubbing back and forth across the muscle or along the muscle, by using small circular movements or a wringing motion.

4. Tapotement

Tapotement is a percussion stroke where the hand action rhythmically stimulates muscles and nerves and circulation. The hand position can either be with flat palms or cupped. Some practitioners use soft fists or interlock their fingers together with palms flat.

Tapotement is used in Shiatsu and also in Swedish massage. These strokes are often used to signal the end of the previous stroke sequence and make the client aware that being changed from the face down position on the massage table to being face up.

5. Vibration

Vibration refers to trembling, shaking and rocking movements applied to the entire body or to one limb. These particular movements can be done either rapidly or slowly and are designed to reverberate through the surrounding tissues. Vibration helps to break holding patterns in the posture and facilitates a momentary release of tension in the muscle being worked on.