

What is clinical massage?

Advanced clinical massage is a method of massage therapy that creatively combines and applies a range of techniques to achieve a specific outcome – to get people out of pain or reduce it significantly enough to improve quality of life, increase range of motion, improve posture and always to relax.

How does clinical massage differ from sports massage?

Many of the techniques used in clinical massage therapy are the same as those used in sports massage, but they are applied to a different type of patient (namely the general public as opposed to an athlete or sports person) in a different type of way. Massage does not need to be painful to be effective; the concept of a 'good hurt' applies to clinical massage where the source of pain is addressed slowly and sensitively, working with the patient who is always in control.

Another feature of clinical massage is the emphasis on self-care. The therapist will discuss lifestyle issues if appropriate or teach the patient to do exercises or relaxation techniques at home to ensure that they are fully involved and in control of their recovery.

A range of **advanced bodywork techniques** are combined creatively to provide the most effective treatment for the individual. These include:

Deep tissue - cross-fibre friction or static pressure using thumbs, fingers, forearms or elbows is applied specifically to areas of muscle that are restricted to release the tissue, enabling it to resume its full length and functionality

Soft tissue release - a combination of static pressure and stretching is applied to individual sections of a muscle to release constricted areas and return it to its full length and functionality

MFR (myo-fascial release) - Fascia is the connective tissue that surrounds all fibres, nerves, blood vessels and structures of the body. Adhesions and restrictions in fascia cause pain and dysfunction of muscles, joints and organs and releasing the fascia either directly (with pressure and movement) or indirectly (waiting for the fascia to respond to touch) enables the therapist to work more deeply and effectively.

Hot & Cold - The appropriate use of heat and cold plays an important role in restoring functionality of muscles, especially after injury.

Acupressure points are located all over the body and are used in eastern medical practice to treat many pain conditions and illness. Knowledge of these points helps a clinical massage therapist to treat many conditions more effectively.

Trigger points are constricted areas in a muscle that are tender to touch and produce a predictable pain pattern. Locating and releasing trigger points using deep tissue work and MFR is central to a clinical massage treatment.

Stretching muscles helps them to resume their full length and functionality. Stretching may be passive where the therapist does the work, or may require resistance or co-operation from the client to strengthen or re-programme the muscle.

What sort of conditions can be treated?

In addition to general stress and tension, more or less any condition will benefit from clinical massage.

A few tried and tested examples include:

stiffness/pain in the low back, neck and shoulders (including sciatica and frozen shoulder)

RSI conditions (eg: tennis elbow)

carpal tunnel syndrome

migraine, headaches and jaw pain

leg, knee and foot pain (including plantar fasciitis)

and many many more (just ask!)

People with long term medical conditions such as osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia, ME, chronic fatigue syndrome, IBS and depression can also benefit.

How many treatments are required?

It depends on the condition and how long it has been present. To achieve a specific outcome think "fix in six", but usually 2 – 3 one hour treatments will produce a significant effect or even solve the problem.

Chronic conditions such as frozen shoulder can take more than six. For long-term medical conditions and illnesses such as fibromyalgia, cancer or HIV a long-term approach with treatments every month or fortnight is beneficial.

Why are treatments one hour? Surely half an hour is enough?

To achieve the desired outcome it is necessary for a clinical massage therapist to work slowly and specifically, listening to the whole body. The cause of pain is not always located where the pain is felt and other parts of the body may also call for treatment where they have needed to work harder as a result of

dysfunction in another area. It is also important to relax the client so that s/he is able to receive treatment and experience it's full benefits. Providing after-care advice and teaching stretches takes time and is also crucial to the effectiveness of the treatment. An hour goes by very quickly!

Who can benefit from clinical massage?

Everyone! Our bodies are our most important resource and we need to look after them. Inviting the listening touch of a trained intuitive bodyworker who takes an holistic approach to their work is one of the most rewarding investments a person can make. While a clinical massage treatment will focus on a specific problem the therapist still treats the whole person and one outcome should always be an increased sense of wellbeing and relaxation.

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