

Experts say no matter how severe the cancer treatment's side effects, there's always a way to administer some type of bodywork. While hospitalized, some appropriate and gentle techniques for cancer patients include craniosacral therapy, polarity therapy, reiki, and Therapeutic Touch. As the patient's energy returns, work can move from a focus of being comfort-oriented to work that includes range of motion techniques, scar release, and even therapies to address body image issues.

### Massage for the Journey Ahead

Whether to reduce anxiety before an upcoming medical procedure, to help control nausea related to chemotherapy, or to diminish cancer- or treatment-related pain, oncology massage offers many options for the cancer patient. If you or someone you love is living with cancer, consider massage as a therapeutic, nurturing choice to help navigate this difficult journey.

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# Massage & Cancer



## Massage and Cancer

Research shows that massage has astounding therapeutic value, and that's equally true for its use with cancer patients. If you or someone you love is living with cancer, bodywork can serve as a nurturing complement to mainstream treatment.

Massage can be a vital part of the process to help cancer patients reclaim and reintegrate their body—making them whole again, says

Gayle MacDonald, author of *Medicine Hands: Massage Therapy for People with Cancer*. “Skilled touch is beneficial at nearly every stage of the cancer experience—during hospitalization, the pre- or post-operative period, in the outpatient clinic, during chemotherapy and radiation, recovery at home, remission, or cure.”



## Oncology Massage

This work is often called oncology massage, which refers to massage tailored to the needs of individuals with cancer. This specialized practice requires therapists to be fully educated in, and pay close attention to, the physical and emotional needs of clients in all stages of cancer, including a thorough understanding of precautions that should be practiced both during and after periods of radiation, chemotherapy, as well as pre- and post-surgery.

### How Massage Can Help

The possible benefits of oncology massage include:

- Reduced stress and fatigue
- Improved sleep
- Reduced nausea
- Relief from pain
- Reduced anxiety

### The Power of Touch

Chemotherapy can be a difficult, long leg of the cancer journey, and clients report that low-impact massage can do wonders to ease their experience. In addition to its physical benefits, the positive, compassionate touch massage offers may also help counteract the cancer patient's experience with painful medical procedures and treatments, and bring comfort during these difficult times.



“It is fair to say that the companionship of massage therapy has the potential to ease a host of psychosocial problems that arise during any life-threatening health crisis,” says Tracy Walton, a leader in the field of oncology massage. “Among them are isolation, fear, grief, and stigmatization.”

### What Technique is Right for You?

The place to start is to consult with your physician and your massage therapist. All cancer patients can receive touch therapies from properly trained therapists, whether it be Swedish massage, shiatsu, or various fascial release techniques. The key is in adapting these modalities to the individual's needs.

