

SWEDISH MASSAGE

What is Swedish massage good for?

The various Swedish massage techniques are designed to improve your circulation, soothe your muscles and make you feel more relaxed.

Swedish massage uses softer strokes on the bonier and more delicate parts of the body, and stronger strokes where there is thicker muscle coverage. This adjustment of pressure makes it an ideal massage for relaxation.

Besides the calming benefits, Swedish massage is thought to be good for:

- easing muscular strain by flushing out toxins
- improving circulation by increasing oxygen flow in the blood
- helping to keep ligaments and tendons supple
- reducing emotional and physical stress

The oils and lotions used in massage can stain fabrics, so it's a good idea to opt for something old if you're wearing your own clothes.

As with all treatments, inform your therapist of any medical conditions you may have and tell them if you are -- or just think you might be -- pregnant.

It's best to avoid heavy meals and alcohol in the hours leading up to your massage.

What to expect from a Swedish massage?

Your massage will probably last around 60 minutes. You will be given time to undress privately and lie down on the massage table, which is usually padded for extra comfort, where you may cover yourself with towels. You don't have to be completely exposed at any point; I will uncover one little bit of you at a time depending on the area I am focusing on. If you're worried about anything, don't hesitate to say so.

Oils will be massaged into your body with a series of strokes and techniques specific to the part of your body and what you want to achieve; for example, this might be long, gliding strokes across your

back to help you relax, or kneading or rubbing your shoulders to unwind any knots. The treatment takes into account the delicate or tender areas of your body, so it should be comfortable and soothing.

I like to play music during massage, as it can help you to unwind. Don't be afraid to say if you'd prefer not to have it - or indeed if you're unhappy with anything else in the treatment room. Being content in your surroundings is important for relaxation and will help you sink happily into your massage.

The same goes for talking. I am very sensitive to how much my client wants to communicate and will limit or encourage conversation accordingly. Some people like to chat a bit; others don't. It doesn't matter as long as you're comfortable, relaxed and receptive.

Afterwards, you'll probably feel quite relaxed and maybe even sleepy, so give yourself plenty of time to unwind. Savour the feeling of having every muscle in your body gently stretched and smoothed out