

## MASSAGE AND MYOTHERAPY FACT SHEET 1: AN OVERVIEW

Sponsored by Massage & Myotherapy Australia

Massage therapy and myotherapy are used to provide relief from the symptoms of pain and stress.

Massage therapists, remedial massage therapists and myotherapists (massage therapist or therapist), often fill the gap when patients seek alternatives to medications and other therapies because they feel that massage therapy and myotherapy provide a level of relief that is appropriate to their needs.

As with all health-related therapies, no two people respond in the same way and no two therapists can provide a massage in the same way.

Massage therapy or myotherapy may or may not be right for you. Finding a professional, qualified therapist that you are comfortable with, and that has the appropriate experience and skills, will assist you to develop a pain management strategy that is right for you.

*The following provides information to help you to find a professional Therapist best suited to your needs.*

### Take the time to ensure your therapist is qualified and a member of a professional association

Massage & Myotherapy Australia describe therapeutic and remedial massage, and myotherapy as manual manipulation therapies involving the deep or shallow soft tissues of the body including muscles, tendons, and ligaments.

Professional remedial massage and myotherapy is delivered by therapists who have recognised qualifications such as a Bachelor Degree in Health Science, Advanced Diploma of Myotherapy, Diploma of Remedial Massage Therapy or Certificate IV in Massage Therapy Practice and undertake at least 1,000 hours of specialty training. They should:

- be members of a professional association that provides a formal complaints mechanism and code of conduct
- hold a current qualification from a Registered Training Organisation (RTO)
- hold current Senior/Level 2 First Aid Qualifications
- hold current Malpractice, Public Liability Insurance (minimum \$2,000,000)
- have completed a statutory declaration, indicating that they have not been charged with or convicted of an offence of harm to a person nor been subject to disciplinary proceedings with a Private Health Fund or other association
- undergo continuing professional education to a specified number of hours each year.

Some may also be a Certified Specialist<sup>®</sup> under Massage & Myotherapy Australia's National Quality Assurance program.

The qualifications, in relation to conditions treated by massage therapists and myotherapists, are listed in Table 1.

Condition	Certificate IV	Diploma	Advanced Diploma or Degree
Stress	Yes	Yes	Yes
Relaxation	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tension	Yes	Yes	Yes
Headaches	Yes	Yes	Yes
Muscular tears	Yes	Yes	Yes
Postural dysfunction	Yes	Yes	Yes
Neck dysfunction and pain		Yes	Yes
Thoracic dysfunction and pain		Yes	Yes
Lumbar dysfunction and pain		Yes	Yes
Sacroiliac dysfunction and pain		Yes	Yes
Shoulder dysfunction and pain		Yes	Yes
Hip dysfunction and pain		Yes	Yes
Tendonitis/Tendinopathy		Yes	Yes
Muscular strain		Yes	Yes
Reduced range of motion		Yes	Yes
Palliative conditions such as cancer		Yes	Yes
Neural tension			Yes
Reduced fitness			Yes
Reduced strength			Yes

**Table 1 Massage qualifications and conditions treated**

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### There is a significant difference between soft tissue manipulation and adjunct services

Adjunct services and techniques that extend beyond hands-on direct physical contact, are those that combine the use of devices or supplementary techniques, such as myofascial dry needling, cupping or aromatherapy, augment massage or soft tissue manipulation therapies. These services are not classified as massage.

Clinically-focused massage modalities which, depending on the condition and circumstances of the patient, can combine a variety of massage techniques to help address and describe the appropriate and effective response for a given condition or lifestyle issue.

Qualified therapists generally use an integrated approach, drawing on a variety of techniques and adjunct services to assist in achieving relief from pain and stress, and improving mobility.

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### Not all massage or myotherapy treatments are the same

On a regular basis, qualified therapists provide care and relief from stress and anxiety through self-management and low intensity care, but they vary considerably.

As a guide, therapeutic massage assists with the relief from aches, pains, and stress-related symptoms. Remedial massage therapy and myotherapy are useful therapies in pain management arising from chronic musculoskeletal conditions, related to ageing, chronic conditions, postural issues, sporting, and occupational injuries.

Myotherapists, and remedial therapists with the appropriate training, apply the higher-level skills required for advanced assessment and treatment protocols which are used for both therapeutic and remedial needs.

The *Australian Association of Massage Therapists: Practitioner Survey, 2013*, (now known as Massage & Myotherapy Association) involved determining the kinds of services that therapists provide and their patients' characteristics. Table 2 below presents the 'recorded reason and commonly recommended number of sessions when applying massage therapy'.

Complaint or condition	Number of sessions	
	Average	Median
Diabetes Effects Management	10	6
Addictions Rehabilitation Support	10	6
Cancer Treatment Issues	9	5
Other Chronic Conditions	9	5
Health and Wellness	9	5
Motor Vehicle Accident and Rehabilitation	8	6
Psychological Distress	8	6
Joint Pain and Stiffness, including Arthritis	8	5
Back Pain and/or Other Back Problems	6	4
Repetitive Strain Injury Syndromes	6	5
Neck/Shoulder Pain	5	4
Other Acute Injury or Pain Conditions	5	4
Sports Injury Management and Rehabilitation	4	4
Headaches or Migraines	4	3

**Table 1: Massage consultations in relation to condition treated**

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### Some funding is available through the private and public health systems

Massage therapy and myotherapy-funded programs are administered by various state and federal jurisdictions in isolation and with a focus that is primarily limited to physical function and injury. These include veterans, work and motor accident and some short term pain management when administered or overseen by medical or allied health practitioner.

Remedial massage and myotherapy subsidies are also available through the Private Health Insurance Rebate for complementary therapies through qualified massage therapists and myotherapists who have an eligible registered Provider Number. However, rebates vary considerably and are well below the cost of provision.

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### More information:

Through a simple Google search you can find more information from the following reliable sources:

- [Australian Massage Directory](#) – find a professional qualified local therapist
- [Massage & Myotherapy Australia](#) website – consumer section
- [Australian Government Health Directory](#) – free health advice
- [US Department of Health and Services](#) – massage therapy - what you need to know