

Tips to get the most out of your massage

Drink water before and after

It is important that you to flush toxins after a massage, but it's equally important to hydrate before climbing on the table. The pressure from a masseuse's hands pushes lactic acid out of your muscle tissue and into your bloodstream, where it circulates throughout your body. Without water, your blood flow is sluggish and stagnated and might not process these toxins as readily as hydrated, less viscous fluids.

Talk to your massage therapist

Let's discuss your concerns, needs and expectations before you start. Note problem areas, such as a bad back, trick knee or the knotted shoulders caused by computer work. Express your environmental preferences, too, including music and room temperature. You don't want the ambience jarring you out of your cozy zone. If you're an aromatherapy fan and have a specific preference, bring a sample with you.

Don't be bashful

In general, the less you wear, the fewer obstacles to a good massage. We also have specific sheet-draping techniques that will ensure your modesty is protected at all times.

Stop thinking

This might be the hardest part of relaxing into a massage. You may find something like yogic rhythmic breathing will help prepare your body and brain. Just before your massage do some deep breathing exercises, inhaling from the stomach, upward through the chest cavity and mentally swirl the breath through your brain before exhaling through your mouth. Five cycles usually does the trick.

Relax your body as well as your mind

Don't engage your muscles to help the therapist maneuver a part of your body. This doesn't really help because it just tenses your muscles and makes the therapist's work harder.

Breathe through the pain

At times it may be painful to have deep tissue work done on some areas. Don't hold your breath when the therapist begins working on a muscular knot, or the muscle will continue to hold its tension. Instead, start narrowing your focus to a deep, rhythmic breathing pattern. Try to visualize tension leaving your body on the exhale and allow your body to relax a little more with each breath.

Talk less -- listen to your body more

A deep tissue massage is both corrective and therapeutic. It is beneficial for many physical problems, including sports injuries and chronic pain. If you're chattering away during a massage you're not really concentrating on your body. Animated conversation can make your body tense up. But do talk to give the masseuse instructions -- when the pressure is too soft or hard; if you're feeling chilly; or if you'd like work on a specific area.

Recover slowly

Don't just jump off the table after the therapist has left the room. Take a minute to glory in your newly relaxed body. Roll slowly onto your dominant side, push gently up to a seated position with one arm, and sit on the edge of the table for a few moments. Instead of going for a run post massage, relax with a tall glass of water.

Drink more water

Flush those nasty toxins out of your system with plenty of water. Otherwise, you could end up with sore muscles and nausea -- making the massage a complete waste of time and money. On any day you should drink half your body weight (in ounces) of water. While there's no magic number of how many more ounces you should drink, the more water you consume the better you'll feel.

Take it easy

Help your body and mind hold on to the benefits of the massage as long as possible. Return to the breathing exercises if you begin tensing up. At the end of the day, treat yourself to a relaxing evening. Eat a light dinner. Maybe even soak in a warm bath with scented salts or aromatherapy oils, and then tuck yourself in bed for a deep, restorative sleep.