

Physiotherapy Series



Home Massage



Massage is a form of physiotherapy that can be easily performed by oneself

Benefits of Massage

Massage enhances blood and lymphatic circulation in the skin and muscles, thereby reducing pain, accelerating the healing of joint or muscle injuries, removing bruises and swelling, relieving muscle fatigue, and alleviating muscle tension and cramps. It also helps relieve constipation, soften scars, enhance beauty, relieve mental stress, and strengthen family bond.



Department of Health



Elderly Health Service

Conditions not suitable for massage

- Acute inflammation (i.e., there is pain, swelling, heat and redness)
- Unhealed fracture, recent dislocation
- Unhealed or recently healed wound (including blisters)
- Severe swelling or pain
- Acute thrombophlebitis or deep vein thrombosis
- Unstable heart disease, high blood pressure, or high fever
- Acute inflammation of internal organs (e.g., nephritis)
- Cancer site
- Severe osteoporosis
- Skin problems (e.g., psoriasis, contagious skin diseases, severe acne, etc.)
- Avoid direct abdominal massage during nausea, vomiting, pregnancy, menstruation, or after heavy meals, unless advised by a physiotherapist or doctor

**Points
to note**

- In cases of fragile skin, a tendency to bruise, varicose veins, or pain during massage, one should consult a healthcare professional beforehand
- Apply moderate and comfortable pressure, which should not cause pain
- Avoid deep pressure on areas with major nerves, blood vessels, or lymph nodes (e.g., anterior cervical triangle), or bony prominences (e.g. knee cap) to prevent injury
- Avoid excessive joint pulling or pressing
- Monitor skin condition and response (especially in diabetes) to detect or prevent damage early
- The body part being massaged should be well-supported (e.g., with a pillow)
- Exposure of the area being massaged is recommended, but other body parts should be covered with clothing or a towel to avoid chills
- Massage oil can be used if the skin at the massage area is dry
- For joint manipulation (e.g., “cracking” neck or lower back), only seek treatment from qualified professionals (e.g., registered physiotherapists or Chinese Medicine Practitioners, etc.)
- Never use sharp tools for massage
- Massage time can be adjusted according to the size of the massage area

Method

I. Thumb Kneading

To increase the elasticity of connective tissue and reduce soft tissue adhesions in injured joints or muscles.

Example (1): Scar softening

1

Place your thumb next to the scar and press gently

2

Keep your thumb fixed on the skin and massage in a side-to-side or circular motion

3

Perform 2-3 times daily, about 5 minutes each time



Note: Do not massage fresh scars directly. Please consult a healthcare professional first if direct massage of a scar is needed.

Example (2): Tennis Elbow (Suitable for chronic stage)

1

Put your thumb below the bony prominence of the outer side of your elbow

2

Gently press your thumb downward and fix it on the skin

3

Massage in a side-to-side direction

4

Perform 2-3 times daily, about 5 minutes each time



Key point: The thumb should not rub against or move relative to the skin.

II. Finger Kneading

Helps to relieve muscle fatigue and alleviate muscle tension and cramps, suitable for larger, thinner, and superficial muscles.

Example: Neck and shoulder muscle fatigue

1

Place your hand on your shoulder (or at the back of your neck), keeping your fingers slightly bent

2

Press your fingers firmly on your shoulder (or the back of your neck) and fix them on the skin

3

Massage in an up-and-down (or side-to-side at the back of your neck) or circular direction

4

1-3 times daily, 10-20 minutes each time. (Alternate hands every few minutes to avoid overfatigue or strain)

Key point: Fingers should not rub against or move relative to the skin.



Shoulder



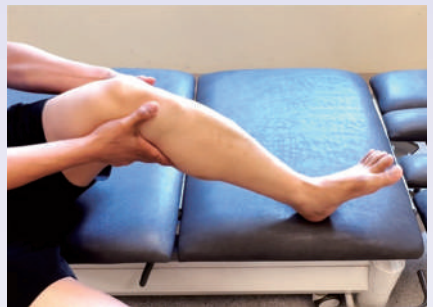
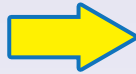
Back of neck

III. Stroking

Suitable for removing bruises and swelling, relieving muscle fatigue, and soothing muscle tension and cramps.

Example: Mild swelling of the calf/ muscle fatigue/ cramps

- 1 Sit down and rest your leg on a chair or bed
- 2 Wrap your hands around your ankle
- 3 Keep your hands gently pressing on your calf, and move upwards towards the knee
- 4 Then repeat again from the ankle
- 5 1-3 times daily, 10-20 minutes each time



Key point: Keep your hands and palms close to your calf, do not push towards your ankle, and avoid pressing on your knee cap to avoid wear and tear.

IV. Kneading + Stroking

Helps improve constipation.

A. Kneading

1

Make a fist with one hand, cover it with the other hand, and place it on the upper left side of the abdomen

2

Gently press on the abdomen and move slowly towards the lower left side of the abdomen in circular motions

3

Repeat from right to left on the upper right side of the abdomen

4

Repeat from bottom to top on the lower right side of the abdomen

5

Repeat the above steps 10 times

Key point: When moving your hands in circular motion, maintain a gentle pressure on the abdomen.

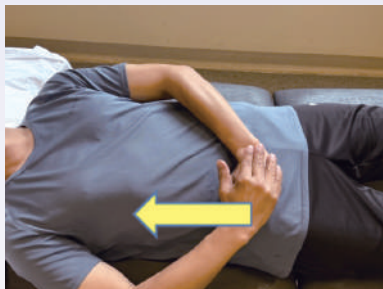
1



2



3



B. Stroking

1

Overlaps your hands on the lower right side of the abdomen

2

Gently press your abdomen with both hands

3

Then slowly massage the abdomen in a clockwise direction

4

2 minutes daily



Summary

- ▲ While massage offers various benefits, its therapeutic effect may have limitations. When necessary, it should be combined with other appropriate care methods (e.g., heat and cold therapy, rest, exercise, etc.) for better results.
- ▲ Massage cannot replace prescribed medications, physiotherapy, or other treatments. If the cause of the illness is unknown or if the condition is severe, persistent, or worsening, one should seek medical advice as soon as possible and do not delay treatment.

Please consult a physiotherapist or other healthcare professionals if you have any queries about this pamphlet.

Elderly Health Service,
Department of Health
Website: www.elderly.gov.hk
Elderly Health Infoline: 2121 8080

