



Integrative Therapy Fact Sheet: Oncology Massage

What is Oncology Massage?

Massage therapy is the application of touch using different style strokes to support the muscles and soft tissues of the body. *Oncology massage* therapy is adjusted to provide a safe and helpful session for any patient with a cancer diagnosis. The massage therapists at the Zakim Center are all oncology massage therapists and have gone through additional training beyond their standard massage therapy education.

How Can Oncology Massage Help Me?

Oncology massage is used as an integrative therapy in cancer care to support quality of life and has been shown to promote relaxation and comfort. Research and clinical experience show that it may also help with symptoms of the cancer/illness as well as side effects from treatment such as: pain, anxiety and depression, fatigue, insomnia, nausea and peripheral neuropathy.

Oncology massage may be used before cancer treatment, during treatment, and/or after treatment. The Zakim Center Team encourages collaboration with your medical team should you have any questions or concerns about your integrative plan.

Massage therapy should not be used to replace medical care or to postpone seeing a healthcare provider about a health problem. You are encouraged to tell your healthcare provider about any and all therapies you are using outside of your conventional care.

Oncology Massage at the Zakim Center

Massage sessions are 45 minutes long and include a check-in with your massage therapist. Your first visit may require a bit more time to allow you and your therapist to discuss:

- your medical history, treatment, laboratory results, and any information that will help your therapist provide you with a safe and effective session;
- any adjustments that may be needed for safety and to ensure you are comfortable throughout your session;
- benefits of massage for your condition and symptoms;
- what your goals are for this session and/or ongoing sessions; and
- any questions that you might have before starting the massage session.

The massage session can involve the full body or only part of the body depending on your needs and comfort. It can be done over clothing or on exposed skin, either on a massage table or seated. You will always have privacy while you undress for the session, and during the session you will be draped for your privacy. Whether the session is seated in a massage chair or



laying down on a massage table, your comfort and safety is our first concern, and you are encouraged to discuss your comfort needs with the massage therapist.

After the massage, you will be encouraged to get up slowly, and your therapist will give you privacy as you dress. Afterwards, your therapist will check in with you and see how you are doing, and will discuss:

- any questions you may have;
- observations, expectations, and recommendations; and
- resources that are available and may be appropriate for you.

To Schedule a Massage Appointment at the Zakim Center

To schedule an oncology massage appointment, please call **617-632-3322**. Massage services are available to Dana-Farber patients only.

Cost of Oncology Massage

We do not accept insurance for massage appointments. However, you may request a detailed receipt to submit to your insurance company for reimbursement if massage is a covered service. Patients pay \$65 for each massage appointment.

Thanks to the generosity of donors, financial assistance is available to those who qualify. For more information please contact the Zakim Center office at **617-632-3322** or **Zakim_Center@dfci.harvard.edu**.

Additional Information

National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health's "Massage Therapy" Page

<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/massage>

Society for Oncology Massage

<http://www.s4om.org>

To learn more about the Zakim Center's programs and services, please visit our website at **dana-farber.org/zakim**, email **Zakim_Center@dfci.harvard.edu**, or call **617-632-3322**.

This document is for informational purposes only. The content is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.