



Technique of massage for the limbs, back and neck

Introduction

Massage involves working and acting on the body with pressure – structured, unstructured, stationary, or moving – tension, motion, or vibration, done manually or with mechanical aids. Massage can be applied with the hands, fingers, elbows, knees, forearm, feet, or a massage device. Depending on the application and technique used, massage is used to promote relaxation and well-being, and is beneficial in treating sports injuries and other problems affecting the musculature of the body such as postural misalignment and many painful conditions.

Massage for the upper limb

Preparation of the patient

Ask the patient to remove all clothing from the appropriate arm and shoulder. Shoulder straps should also be slipped off.

Stand in walk standing just beyond the patient's fingers tips with outer leg forward.

Treatment of upper limb

Effleurage

Effleurage of the whole limb

Effleurage to the upper limb is usually performed with one hand at a time while the other hand controls both the stability of the limb and the position of the hand. The grasp on the hand should be with the palm cupped so that it obtains a contact with only palmar margin to avoid sticky grasp.

Effleurage of the extensor aspect of arm

One hand grasp the patient's hand in mid prone position and other hand start effleurage under the little finger and proceeds up the ulnar border of the forearm and medial surface of the arm to the axilla.

Effleurage of the flexor aspect of arm

One hand grasps the patient's hand in mid prone position and other hand starts from the thumb over the lateral border of the forearm and lateral surface of the arm to the axilla. Turn the palm into more supination and take the stroke again from the palmar aspect over the finger over the front of the forearm and the anterior surface of the arm to the axilla.

Kneading

All the kneading manipulation in the upperlimb is performed using circling technique. Always be aware that the size of the circle must be related to the size of the area under treatment. The pressure on all the manipulation should be inwards towards the centre of the arm and with upward pressure so that we can assist the venous blood and lymph flow from distal to the proximal.

Double handed alternate kneading

Double hand alternate kneading of the upper limb is usually performed straight down the length of the upper limb, from the shoulder to the finger tips.

Picking up

Picking up on the upper limb muscle is usually performed with one hand at once, and from proximal to distal. The operator's outer hand works on deltoid, triceps and brachioradialis, and the inner hand on the biceps brachii and the forearm flexors. The free hand stabilizes the limb adjacent to the working hand. Progress should be in small stages of about 1-2 cm at a time.

Muscle shaking

Place the patient's limb in the mid prone position and the bulky muscle like deltoid, triceps, biceps and brachioradialis muscle can be shaken. And one should take care not to bounce on the adjacent muscle.

Muscle rolling

Muscle rolling can be performed on each of the upper limb which can be picked up, and this manipulation is often easier to perform on brachioradialis than either wringing or picking up.

Hacking and clapping

Hacking and clapping are usually performed with the patient's forearm pronated, start at the posterior axilla and down the posterior part of deltoid, triceps and then on to the forearm extensors.

Massage to the lower limb

Preparation of the patient

Ask the patient to remove all the clothing below the waist except the briefs or pants. Check that the feet are clean and not malodorous, if necessary ask the patient to wash the feet.

Preparation of the treatment couch

Cover the couch with an underblanket and cotton sheet, and fix them in position with straps. Provide two pillows for the patient's head, and either one large pillow to go under both knees. For the treatment of lower limb patient can lie either supine or prone.

Treatment of the whole lower limb

1. Effleurage

Effleurage of the whole limb

There are two methods of working on the foot

1. Each hand starts with the fingers over the toes, that on the dorsum transverse to the anterolateral side of the ankle slightly in front of that on the plantar aspect, which passes instep to the anteromedial side of the ankle.
2. The alternate method of working on the foot is only different for the hand on the dorsum. For each stroke, the hand starts with the whole hand on the dorsum of the foot, the fingers over the toes and the palm over the tarsus. The heel of the hand is near to the lateral malleolus. The stroke with this hand is initiating by pivoting it with some depth on the dorsum of the foot, so that our fingers turn to lie on the outer side of the foot and then proceed.

Whichever method used, we must abduct and extend our finger so that our hand span first and sides, then the front of the leg over the knee and thigh to the femoral triangle where we should increase our pressure and pause briefly.

2. Kneading

All the kneading manipulations on the lower limb are performed using the circular technique, with the modification for the size of the area under treatment.

a. Kneading of the thigh

The thigh is usually treated with double handed, alternate kneading dealing with the medial and lateral aspect together, and the anterior and posterior aspect together.

b. Kneading round the knee

Start with both hands on the anterior aspect of with the heel of the hand touching above the patella. Work down, letting the heel of the hand divide round the patella, and again let the heel of the hand meet again below the patella.

c. Thumb kneading round the patella

Use the maximum length of thumb and work either one thumb on each side or both thumbs on each side.

d. Finger tip kneading at the knee

Use fingertips to work on each side of the bony area of the knee with thumb resting on the adjacent area.

e. Kneading of the calf muscle

The lower limb may be flexed slightly to give a better access.

f. Kneading of the foot

Place the outer hand on the dorsum of the foot, with fingers laterally and thumb below the medial malleolus.

3. Picking up

Picking up manipulation can be performed in bulky muscle of thigh and calf muscles.

4. Wringing

Each muscle of the thigh and calf muscle can be treated with wringing manipulation separately.

5. Hacking and clapping

Hacking and clapping on the lower limb are usually performed regionally. Both manipulations can be completed on thigh before proceeding to the calf, followed the petrissage to the thigh before kneading is practiced on the calf.

The line of work should go up and down the limb, with the hand striking the muscles across their length and so cross the long axis of the muscle fibres.

Massage of the back

Preparation of the patient

Ask the patient to remove all the clothing except briefs and pants

Preparation of the treatment couch

Cover the couch with an under blanket and cotton sheet and fix them in position using straps. If the couch has a nose piece remove it, if not, place two pillows across one another at right angles at the head of couch, so that the patient's nose can be rested at the crossings. Provide a small pillow under the abdomen and possibly one under the ankle. Cover the untreated part.

Treatment of the back

1. Effleurage of the back

The effleurage manipulation of the back can be divided into two parts

a. The lumbar stroke

b. The back stroke

a. The lumbar stroke: starts with our hands on the middle of the lumbar region at its lowest point and finished at the groin, about three strokes should be made each with an upward curve so that the whole lumbar region is treated.

b. The back stroke: starts with our hand in the lumbar region. The first stroke at the sides goes to the axilla. The second stroke goes from the more central area to the axilla. The third stroke proceeds up the middle of the back to the supraclavicular area, curving over the middle of the upper fibres of trapezius.

2. Kneading

i. Kneading on the back

The pressure is directed towards the axilla on the main part of the back and upward and downward direction.

ii. Alternate double handed kneading

The lines of work proceed downward from

- a. just below the axilla to the outside of the buttock
- b. over the scapula to the buttocks
- c. over the superior of the scapula to the buttocks.

iii. Single handed kneading

Single handed kneading can be performed on any area of the back.

iv. Superimposed kneading

Superimposed kneading is performed for a greater depth than single handed work.

v. Thumb kneading

The area most often given thumb kneading is the length of the sacrospinalis.

3. Skin rolling

This manipulation is performed by pulling the skin from midline to side by lifting the skin with the thumb and thus reversing the performance.

4. Skin wringing

This manipulation is mainly used to mobilize the oedema fluid from the back.

5. Muscle rolling

Rolling of sacrospinalis is performed one side at a time. Place two thumb form a straight line and one on the far side are place to exert pressure outwards from between the vertebral spinous process and the medial margin of the far side sacrospinalis.

6. Hacking and clapping

Hacking and clapping on the back is done in four lines i.e two each side of midline and is started under the more distant axilla. Hacking manipulation can be applied either across or transverse of the back. The pressure of manipulation varies according to those of soft tissue.

Massage of the neck

Preparation of the patient

Ask the patient to unclothe from the hairline to just below the clavicle. There are four patient positions for neck massage

- a. patient in prone lying
- b. patient in supine lying
- c. patient in side lying
- d. patient in forward lean sitting

Treatment of the neck

1. Effleurage

The neck strokes are performed with the flat of the fingers starting on the side of the neck and going to the supraclavicular gland. A second stroke down and back of the neck, goes down to the same gland and a third stroke goes down the back and side of the neck with more of the hand in contact, turning over the area of the medial angle of the scapula to continue to the axilla.

2. Kneading

The fingers pads are used on the posterior aspect from the occiput down to where the neck widens and then hands are flattened, possibly and continue on the interscapular area.

3. Picking up

Place one hand round the whole posterior aspect of the neck and performed a single handed picking up manipulation which can involve into simultaneous work done on the lower part of the upper fibre trapezius with one of our hands on each side of the neck.

4. Muscle rolling

The posterior column of neck muscle on each side may roll by placing the fingers just behind the transverse process and the thumb alongside the spinous process.

5. Hacking and clapping

Hacking and clapping may be performed on the neck alone, with the line of work starting near the occiput and proceeding to the lateral part of the shoulder. Two line may be used, one more lateral, and one more posterior on the neck.

Conclusion

Anyone can benefit from therapeutic massage when it is done by a fully qualified and competent practitioner. Massage is also applicable for people currently in treatment for medical conditions, people with disabilities, and expecting mothers, although further precautions that may have to be taken to protect the health of the patient. Those who are unsure about whether or not therapeutic massage is for them should consult thoroughly to find if there are any contraindications.