



# Can massage help anxiety

## Introduction

Many clinical trials have shown that massage reduces anxiety, along with a range of other symptoms such as pain, depression and high blood pressure.

## What the trials tell us

The trial results tell us that that practically any massage works. It don't need any of the therapeutic add ons normally associated with therapeutic massage, nor does it need the use of any special points or rituals. It appears that the only thing required is does the normal things massage does: relaxes muscles, works on tender lumps and stimulates blood flow. As expected, once off applications of massage were tested for their short term effect, while multiple applications of therapy were used to produce more significant and lasting results. There is a summary of the trials below. You will find trial three very interesting.

## A practical away to get these benefits

The trials used repeated applications of therapy to get the best results. Multiple sessions a week were common, while one even used the massage for three 15 minute sessions per day. If done by professionals on an ongoing basis this would be extremely expensive and time consuming. A practical way to use this therapy to help anxiety would be the self use of vibration massage. This is easy to use, has the desired effects and can be self applied for no ongoing cost.

## Trial details

### *Trial one: hospital patients with high blood pressure (1)*

This trial used 120 patients hospitalised with high blood pressure. The patients were given three 15 minute sessions of back massage each day for six days. Those receiving the massages had excellent reductions in anxiety and blood pressure.

### *Trial two: those caring for cancer patients (2)*

Those caring for cancer patients were given a 15 minute clothed "chair massage" each day for a week. The massages were shown to improve anxiety, blood pressure and sleep quality.

### *Trial three: "normal" faculty and staff at the university (3)*

A 15 minute chair massage was used twice a week or five weeks. Those receiving the massage not only had reduced anxiety, the researchers found that it caused them to increase speed and accuracy doing math computations.

#### ***Trial four: people with shoulder pain (4)***

People with shoulder pain were given nine 30 minute sessions of Thai massage over three weeks. The massage was shown to reduce pain, muscle tension and anxiety.

#### ***Trial five: adolescent wrestlers (5)***

Adolescent (sports) wrestlers were given ten 25 minute sessions of “sports massage”. The trial showed that the massages significantly decreased stress and anxiety. The researchers speculated that this may improve their mental health, and thereby improve their performance.

#### ***Trial six: workers facing retrenchment (6)***

Workers facing retrenchment were given six weekly “chair massages”. The massages were shown to reduce anxiety.

#### ***Trial seven: cancer patients (7)***

This huge study used 1290 cancer patients. A variety of “Swedish” massages were used ranging from “light touch” to more normal massage, and from 20-60 minutes. The choice of massage was determined from an assessment of each patient. The trial found that massage gave considerable improvement in anxiety, pain, fatigue, nausea and depression.

#### ***Trial eight: post operation patients (8)***

This trial involved patients following abdominal surgery, so massage was applied to the hands and the feet. Three 20 minute sessions of “Swedish” massage were used, and was shown to significantly reduce stress and anxiety.

## **Bibliography**

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