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Great information about staying healthy and the role massage therapy can play in your wellness program, all at your fingertips!

**ON THE INTERNET:** CHECK OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HOW MASSAGE THERAPY CAN HELP YOU DEAL WITH LOW-BACK PAIN BY VISITING [NPR.ORG](http://NPR.ORG). HERE, YOU'LL FIND INFORMATION ABOUT A RECENT STUDY ON THE SUBJECT, AS WELL AS INTERVIEWS WITH BACK PAIN SUFFERERS WHO FOUND RELIEF USING MASSAGE THERAPY.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE BENEFITS OF MASSAGE THERAPY, → visit [amtamassage.org](http://amtamassage.org)

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## massage and low-back pain

Low-back pain is one of the most common complaints of consumers, and now there's research that suggests massage therapy may just be more effective in dealing with low-back pain than other more traditional medical interventions. "This is important because chronic back pain is among the most common reasons people see doctors and alternative practitioners, including massage therapists," explains Dr. Daniel Cherkin, Director of Group Health Research Institute and lead author of the study. "It's also a common cause of disability, absenteeism and 'presenteeism,' when people are at work but can't perform well."

The study comprised 401 patients aged 20 to 65 years old with non-specific chronic low-back pain and compared the effectiveness of either relaxation or structural massage versus usual care, including medication and physical therapy. Participants were asked about their abilities to perform daily activities and then randomly assigned to receive one of three treatments.

One group received full-body relaxation massage, often called Swedish massage, and another received focused deep tissue massage, where specific pain-related tissues, ligaments and joints are targeted. The third group received therapies including painkillers, anti-inflammatory drugs, muscle relaxants or physical therapy. Those receiving massage were given a one-hour massage once a week for 10 weeks.

The results speak for themselves. After 10 weeks, the researchers again surveyed the participants about their symptoms and mobility, and again at six months and one year. The two groups of **patients receiving massage therapy reported their back pain was significantly improved or gone altogether.**

"We found that patients receiving massage were twice as likely as those receiving usual care to report significant improvements in both their pain and function," explains Cherkin. "After 10 weeks, about two-thirds of those receiving massage improved substantially, versus only about one-third in the usual care group."

Although previous studies on massage therapy and low-back pain have concentrated primarily on the effectiveness of deep tissue massage, researchers are hopeful about the success of relaxation massage modalities offering significant benefits. Two reasons are that relaxation massage is oftentimes more widely available and more cost-effective.

## → WHAT IS SWEDISH MASSAGE?

Developed in the 1700s by a Swedish doctor, this type of massage is generally used to relax and energize you. Various techniques—including long gliding strokes, applying circular pressure with hands and palms, and firm kneading—are used to relax muscles and increase the oxygen flow in the blood. Lotion or oil is often used during a Swedish massage to reduce friction.

Some terms you might hear in reference to Swedish massage:

**Effleurage.** This term refers to the gliding strokes made by using the palms, thumbs and fingertips.

**Friction.** This technique involves using the palms, hands, thumbs and fingers to make circular pressure.

**Percussion.** To tap briskly.

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Visit our website for more information on the right type of massage for you.

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