Massage Risks

by DONNA SCHWONTKOWSKI

Know the Risks of Getting a Massage for Osteoporosis

Of all the types of massage, which one is absolutely contraindicated if you have osteoporosis?

It would be barefoot massage. Barefoot massage is a type of massage that puts the most pressure on the body with compression forces. Even if a massage therapist is only 5 feet tall and weighs 90 pounds, if you have osteoporosis, your bones are not strong enough to withstand this amount of pressure.

Remember, if someone has brittle bones, something as simple as opening a window may be enough to break a bone. And that's a lot less force than the forces of someone using their feet to massage your back!

Can You Have a Massage If You Have Osteoporosis?

You can have a massage when you have osteoporosis; it simply has to be a light massage, and that's all. You could still have a Swedish massage as long as you inform the massage therapist that you have osteoporosis; she'll use a very light touch. She will also make sure that you are well lubricated so her hands glide over your skin.

Any other types of massage where the practitioner is digging in their fingertips to press out trigger points are also massage methods that you should not have until your bones strengthen. For example, even a chair massage may be too rough for your bones to handle. A chair massage is where you sit in a chair and the top of your neck and back are massaged.

Sports massage is also too deep for you, as it includes trigger point therapy. Thai massage doesn't use force but it does put your body in stretching positions that may overtax the limits of your bones at this point in time. Myofascial release massage is still a bit too much for you, although some of these types of massage may be modified to meet the needs of someone with osteoporosis. That's why it's a good idea to check with your massage therapist first. Since she has no intention of breaking any of your bones (or the desire for a lawsuit), she will be straight with you.

Guidelines to Follow Before Your Massage Appointment

Now when you do get ready to go for your massage, do follow these guidelines:

1. If you can download the forms to fill out prior to your scheduled appointment, you may save more time for massage at the appointment.
2. Drink plenty of water for two days before and after your appointment. Water facilitates an easier and greater detoxification.
3. Don't schedule anything for the rest of your day after your appointment. If you have a lot of things to do, schedule your massage at the end of your day.

4. Take a shower prior to your appointment. The effects of a massage for osteoporosis last longer if you can leave the oils on your skin for a longer period of time, say 10 hours.
5. If you relax a bit before you go in, your body will more quickly relax during your massage and you will experience greater relaxation. Greater relaxation means more benefits.

Now you're ready to pick up the phone and call your new massage therapist. Ask your friends for a referral; however, remember that they may like deep work and 'digging' in to press out trigger points, which you can't have. Keep looking for the best one that fits your needs.