

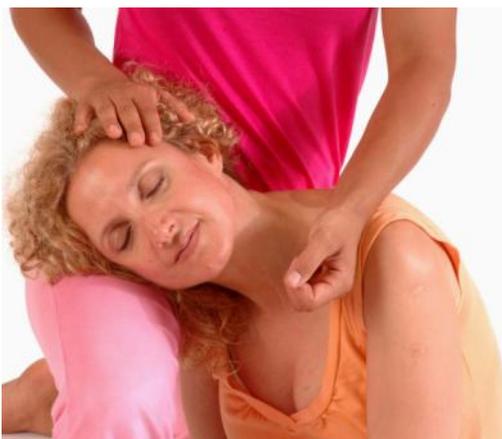
Thai Massage - What, how, and from whom ?

For those new to Thai massage, it can be difficult to know what to expect. Here is some general information about what to look for in a Thai massage session, and how to determine if you have found a qualified therapist.

About Thai massage

Traditional Thai massage is a form of bodywork that combines broad and targeted acupressure, manipulation of energy lines called *sen*, and assisted yoga postures. This traditional healing practice, called *nuad* or *nuad boran* in the Thai language, stands in contrast to western massage therapies.

Traditional Thai massage rarely uses oils or lotions, and the receiver wears lightweight clothing during a treatment. There is constant body contact between the practitioner and client, but rather than rubbing on muscles, the body is compressed, pulled, stretched and rocked in order to clear energy blockages and relieve tension. The practitioner may use thumbs, palms, forearms, elbows, knees and feet to create a dance of movement on the body of the receiver. In this process, joints are opened, muscles and tendons are stretched, internal organs are toned, nerves are calmed, and energy is balanced. The overall effect should be one of relaxation, rejuvenation, and physical and mental well being.



What to expect

Thai massage should not be consistently painful to receive. Accomplished and experienced Thai massage therapists should be able to sense the physical limits of each individual. Occasionally you may feel places of soreness during a treatment, but if you are uncomfortable or if you feel pain on a regular basis throughout the session, it probably means your therapist is under-qualified. If this is the case, consider looking for a new therapist. The day after a full-body Thai massage, however, it is not uncommon to feel some soreness. This can be a sign of your body reacting positively to the therapy, and the discomfort should disappear within 24 hours.

You should never receive professional Thai massage without wearing lightweight loose-fitting clothing. Thai massage is a therapeutic and spiritual healing art. Although many years ago, Western soldiers fighting in Southeast Asia fueled a connotation of “massage” and “Thai massage” as being sexual, traditional Thai massage is strictly non-sexual. If you are ever asked to disrobe for a Thai massage session, or if you feel any concern or uneasiness, immediately stop the session.

Finding a qualified Thai massage therapist



Unfortunately, there are people who practice or teach Thai massage without adequate knowledge or study experience. For the most part, the words “certified” and “certification” mean very little in the realm of Thai massage training, because there is no uniform regulation or licensure for the practice in most countries around the world. Some States, Provinces and countries that require licenses in order to practice Western (table) massage also allow those therapists to legally practice Thai massage, even if they studied for only a few days at a continuing education class. On the other hand, there are serious and dedicated Thai massage students who study for many years and yet they are not recognized by local massage boards.

These days, an increasing number of schools collaborate with Western certifying organizations from different countries, claiming that their programs meet certain licensing requirements. In most cases, both the regulatory agency and the referring school stand to profit financially by this arrangement, yet the student is often left unprepared, with an inflated sense of ego, and lacking strong ethics and standards for safe and effective practice of traditional Thai massage.

It is important for consumers to thoroughly investigate a prospective therapist before making an appointment for a Thai massage. When searching for a therapist, check the person’s study and training history. If it’s not listed on their web site or in their promotional information, ask them about it. How long have they studied Thai massage, and with how many teachers? Have they studied in Thailand? When was the last time they studied Thai massage? Do the descriptions of their services use western anatomical language or Eastern healing terminology? Do they blend Thai massage with other modalities? Are they members of national and international alliances and organizations? As a general guideline, the Thai Healing Alliance suggests a minimum of 250 hours of study over a period of 18 months before one should begin to practice professionally.

Before you make an appointment for a Thai massage, check into each person’s background just as you would do for a prospective employee, or a tenant for your rental home, or a babysitter for your child. A little bit of research and investigation will often lead you to the right person.