

Russian Massage

Russian massage is rapidly gaining popularity in the United States as an important part of sports massage – with specific athletic cycle protocols -- and physical rehabilitation.

Many of the massage strokes are the same as Swedish strokes with more emphasis on friction and vibration. It is a deeper penetrating massage, more stimulating and vigorous than Swedish

Practitioners say that Russian massage is useful for a wide range of musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, neurological, gynecological, internal disorders, and in post-surgical situations. In Russia, the massage therapy department is often the largest department in Russian hospitals and clinics because it is crucial to rehabilitation.

The Russians have been advanced in the study and practice of clinical massage for over 100 years and have documented much research in medical and sports massage. After World War II when pharmaceuticals were in short supply the Soviet Union employed physiatrists – medical doctors with advanced degrees in physical medicine – to research the benefits of using natural healing modalities. They developed a form of petrissage to reverse atrophy in muscles and help stimulate new growth. Unlike other massage therapy, Russian massage is based on the physiology of a dysfunction rather than on anatomy as the principal guideline for treatment. It has a very specific protocol of certain strokes and times for certain ailments and conditions.

Patients describe it as “waking up” both body and mind. It has been used to increase circulation of blood and lymphatic flow, to stimulate production of endorphins, control physical and mental stress, and to increase range of movement. Ailments said to benefit from Russian massage therapy include asthma, insomnia, arthritis, bursitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, hip sprains and strains, rotator cuff injuries, myofascial pain, temporomandibular joint (TMJ) problems, headache, spastic colon, colic, constipation, and immune function disorders. It is also suitable for seniors.

Russian massage uses seven principal techniques:

- Petrissage, a stretching or kneading motion
- Effleurage, a gliding relaxing stroke
- Wringing, a slow deep penetrating stroke
- Friction, a rubbing action
- Percussion – a tapping motion sometimes using trapped air
- Vibration - a continuous-motion stroke ranging from very fast to very slow
- Passive stretching

Each stroke in Russian massage has a known physiological effect on a healthy or dysfunctional tissue.

Primo Rodriguez, NCMT, CRM, took a post-graduate course in Russian massage from the Utah College of Massage Therapy in Salt Lake City.