

# 3

## Client and Therapist Safety

### Chapter Outline

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**CHAPTER WRAP-UP**

### Key Terms

**Antiseptics:** A type of cleaning agent that is generally appropriate for use in a spa setting so long as no blood or body fluid is present.

**Code of ethics:** A document or creed that states a professional group's ethical principles and the values by which the group abides.

**Direct contact:** The transfer of a pathogen from an infected person to an uninfected person through touch, sexual contact such as kissing or intercourse, or expelling body fluid droplets onto a person by sneezing, coughing, or touching mucous membranes and then touching an uninfected person without having washed the hands.

**Disinfectants:** A type of cleaning product that should not be used on the skin and that is stronger than an antiseptic. Disinfectants kill or are effective against most bacteria and viruses.

**Estheticians:** People licensed to practice professional skin care.

**Indirect contact:** The transfer of a pathogen from an infected person to an uninfected person via an inanimate object (known as a fomite) such as a countertop, doorknob, toy, or magazine.

**Lice:** Parasitic animals that can be spread via direct and indirect contact that suck the blood of their hosts and cause itching.

**Mites:** Parasitic animals, similar to lice, that can be spread via direct and indirect contact that suck the blood of their hosts and cause itching.

**Pathogen:** A producer of disease.

**Power differential (power advantage):** The authority a massage therapist is granted by a client based on the client's perception of the massage therapist as a knowledgeable and skilled health care provider.

**Scope of practice:** A term used by regulating boards of health care professions to describe the techniques, activities, and methods that are permitted to a therapist under the law.

**Sterilization:** The elimination of all microorganisms on and in an object through heat, chemical substances, or irradiation.

**Universal precautions:** A protocol used in health care settings that reduces the risk that health care workers will be exposed to bloodborne diseases transmitted through broken skin, mucous membranes, or contact with blood and body fluid.

**Vector transmission:** The transmission of a pathogen via vectors (insects or animals capable of transmitting diseases, including mosquitoes, flies, fleas, ticks, mites, rats, dogs, and cats).

**Vehicle transmission:** The transmission of a pathogen by a "vehicle" such as air, food, and liquid.

This chapter aims to introduce new spa therapists to areas that will need attention and careful planning before spa treatments are offered as an employee or in a private practice. The first area we will explore is ethics and how massage ethics are applied to spa-related situations. Next, is a closer look at sanitation, hygiene, and safety as it relates to spa equipment and spa environments. Reviewing the details of contraindications and understanding how spa treatments might adversely affect a client's condition is also important. We will discuss common conditions and spa-specific contraindications that will help you know when to postpone a treatment or suggest a different service to ensure the client's health.

## Spa Ethics

Ethics is a major branch of philosophy exploring values, morals, right and wrong, good and evil, and responsibility. Also called moral philosophy, ethics is a system of principles governing the appropriate conduct for an individual or group. It is concerned with values and the standards by which human actions can be judged right or wrong. Ethics are different from laws, which are rules of conduct that are recognized by a community as binding or enforceable by authority. Some behaviors may be legal but nonetheless are not ethical. For example, it is not illegal for a therapist to date a client, but the massage community actively discourages this as unethical because dating a client may cause the client harm.

A **code of ethics** states a professional group's ethical principles. It suggests values by which the group abides. Table 3-1 shows the code of ethics for members of Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals (ABMP), the largest massage therapist membership organization in the United States. Review this code of ethics as a reminder of ethical principles that guide your work as a massage therapist. In a spa setting, certain ethical standards are placed in greater focus than in other work environments. Let's review those areas now.

### Commitment to Personal and Professional Boundaries

Boundaries are conscious and subconscious imaginary lines that mark the limits of an individual's personal space or territory. Boundaries create a separation or a border between a person and other people and between a person and the environment. Part of establishing a healthy therapeutic

relationship involves learning how to assert and maintain your own boundaries while respecting the boundaries of clients. One area where this is particularly important is in issues related to sex (see number 8 of the ABMP Code of Ethics in Table 3-1).

There are various levels of sexual misconduct, ranging from lack of attention to sexual innuendo, to sexual impropriety, to sexual abuse of clients. You must always control the atmosphere of the spa business. Allowing clients to act inappropriately is as serious as acting inappropriately yourself.

### Lack of Attention to Sexual Innuendo

It is not uncommon for people to compliment each other and express their affection by positively commenting on another person's appearance. In a spa setting, this can lead to mistrust. If you tell a client, "you look really good in those jeans," it plants a seed of doubt and mistrust in a client's mind about your intentions, regardless of how long you have known each other or how innocent the comment. Because of the intimate nature of spa work, refrain from making any body comments that indicate approval or disapproval of a client's body and physical features such as the eyes, mouth, or hair. Do not carry magazines, pictures, or written material of a sexual nature to the work environment. Do not allow the client to make sexual jokes and discourage clients from commenting on your personal appearance by downplaying those types of compliments with a brief "thank you" and then a return to the business at hand.

### Sexual Impropriety

Sexual impropriety is more serious than a general lack of attention to sexual innuendo and could lead to sexual harassment charges. Behaviors that could be labeled as sexual impropriety include the following:

- Any behavior that is immodest or encourages immodesty in clients; for example, a therapist who stands in the treatment room while the client undresses in front of him or her or allows a client to place himself or herself on top of the drape exposing the genitals or breasts
- Draping loosely or deliberately looking at a client's body while adjusting a drape; not using draping practices or pressuring a client to take off his or her underclothing when he or she leaves it on; and not providing disposable spa underclothing, which allows a client to receive a full-body spa treatment without a loss of modesty
- Using nicknames for clients, especially those that have a sexual connotation, or allowing the client to use sexual nicknames for you such as "Romeo," "Handsome," "Baby," "Honey," or "Sexy"
- Telling a client jokes or listening while a client tells jokes of a sexual nature
- Discussing one's own sexuality within hearing of a client (it's a bad idea with coworkers as well because it could lead to a sexual harassment claim)

**TABLE 3-1 Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals Code of Ethics**

1. **Commitment to High-Quality Care**  
I will serve the best interests of my clients at all times and provide the highest quality of bodywork and service possible. I recognize that the obligation for building and maintaining an effective, healthy, and safe therapeutic relationship with my clients is my responsibility.
2. **Commitment to Do No Harm**  
I will conduct a thorough health history intake process for each client and evaluate the health history to rule out contraindications or determine appropriate session adaptations. If I see signs of, or suspect, an undiagnosed condition that massage may be inappropriate for, I will refer that client to a physician or other qualified health-care professional and delay the massage session until approval from the physician has been granted. I understand the importance of ethical touch and therapeutic intent and will conduct sessions with the sole objective of benefitting the client.
3. **Commitment to Honest Representation of Qualifications**  
I will not work outside the commonly accepted scope of practice for massage therapists and bodywork professionals. I will adhere to my state's scope of practice guidelines (when applicable). I will only provide treatments and techniques for which I am fully trained and hold credible credentials. I will carefully evaluate the needs of each client and refer the client to another provider if the client requires work beyond my capabilities, or beyond the capacity of massage and bodywork. I will not use the trademarks and symbols associated with a particular system or group without authentic affiliation. I will acknowledge the limitations of massage and bodywork by refraining from exaggerating the benefits of massage therapy and related services throughout my marketing.
4. **Commitment to Uphold the Inherent Worth of All Individuals**  
I will demonstrate compassion, respect, and tolerance for others. I will seek to decrease discrimination, misunderstandings, and prejudice. I understand there are situations when it is appropriate to decline service to a client because it is in the best interests of a client's health, or for my personal safety, but I will not refuse service to any client based on disability, ethnicity, gender, marital status, physical build, or sexual orientation; religious, national, or political affiliation; social or economic status.
5. **Commitment to Respect Client Dignity and Basic Rights**  
I will demonstrate my respect for the dignity and rights of all individuals by providing a clean, comfortable, and safe environment for sessions, using appropriate and skilled draping procedures, giving clients recourse in the event of dissatisfaction with treatment, and upholding the integrity of the therapeutic relationship.
6. **Commitment to Informed Consent**  
I will recognize a client's right to determine what happens to his or her body. I understand that a client may suffer emotional and physical harm if a therapist fails to listen to the client and imposes his or her own beliefs on a situation. I will fully inform my clients of choices relating to their care, and disclose policies and limitations that may affect their care. I will not provide massage without obtaining a client's informed consent (or that of the guardian or advocate for the client) to the session plan.
7. **Commitment to Confidentiality**  
I will keep client communication and information confidential and will not share client information without the client's written consent, within the limits of the law. I will ensure every effort is made to respect a client's right to privacy and provide an environment where personal health-related details cannot be overheard or seen by others.
8. **Commitment to Personal and Professional Boundaries**  
I will refrain from and prevent behaviors that may be considered sexual in my massage practice and uphold the highest professional standards in order to desexualize massage. I will not date a client, engage in sexual intercourse with a client, or allow any level of sexual impropriety (behavior or language) from clients or myself. I understand that sexual impropriety may lead to sexual harassment charges, the loss of my massage credentials, lawsuits for personal damages, criminal charges, fines, attorney's fees, court costs, and jail time.
9. **Commitment to Honesty in Business**  
I will know and follow good business practices with regard to record keeping, regulation compliance, and tax law. I will set fair fees and practice honesty throughout my marketing materials. I will not accept gifts, compensation, or other benefits intended to influence a decision related to a client. If I use the Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals logo, I promise to do so appropriately to establish my credibility and market my practice.
10. **Commitment to Professionalism**  
I will maintain clear and honest communication with clients and colleagues. I will not use recreational drugs or alcohol before or during massage sessions. I will project a professional image with respect to my behavior and personal appearance in keeping with the highest standards of the massage profession. I will not actively seek to take someone else's clients, disrespect a client or colleague, or willingly malign another therapist or other allied professional. I will actively strive to positively promote the massage and bodywork profession by committing to self-development and continually building my professional skills.

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Members commit to follow ABMP Code of Ethics to protect clients, themselves, and the massage profession.

- Gender-based comments or harassment, which includes verbal, nonverbal, or physical intimidation or hostility based on sex or sex-stereotyping such as comments about another therapists sexual orientation or criticism of a sexual orientation
- Displaying or distributing sexually explicit drawings, pictures, and written materials (i.e., showing pictures of undraped bodies, no matter how “artistic” they are, in the reception area)
- Requests to date or acceptance of an offer to date
- E-mailing or phoning clients or sending them notes or cards that are not specifically and exclusively related to the spa session; for example, it is acceptable to call a client the day after a session and ask how the muscles



are feeling. It is not acceptable to call a client for a conversation about personal details of events the client mentioned in the session.

### Sexual Abuse

In a therapeutic relationship, the therapist develops a **power advantage** over the client because the therapist is the caregiver (For Your Information 3–1). For this reason, any sexual misconduct, whether or not the client consents, is considered sexual abuse. The therapist is responsible and liable for sexual abuse, even if the client initiates it. Never engage in any sexual activity with a client, whether in or out of the treatment room. This includes behavior that could reasonably be interpreted as sexual, including touching with the hands, body, mouth, or genitals the client’s genitals, breasts, mouth, or anus; allowing the client to touch you; or allowing or encouraging the client to touch himself or herself or masturbate during the session in your presence, or directly after the session, in the treatment room. If the therapist masturbates or touches himself or herself in a sexual manner in the presence of the client, it is sexual abuse.

Sexual impropriety may lead to sexual harassment charges and the loss of massage credentials. Sexual abuse could lead to loss of massage credentials, lawsuits for personal damages, criminal charges, fines, attorney’s fees, court costs, and jail time.

### Scope of Practice

In number 3 of ABMP’s Code of Ethics, therapists make a commitment to honest representation of qualifications by agreeing to work within a defined **scope of practice**. The term *scope of practice* is used by regulating boards of health care professions to describe the techniques, activities, and methods that are permitted to a therapist under the law. Although most states define the scope of practice for massage in similar terms, small variations require the therapist to carefully inspect and understand the scope of practice in the state where he or she practices massage. Ohio’s scope of practice for massage therapy provides a good example and states, “Massage therapy is the treatment of disorders of the human body by the manipulation of soft tissue through the systematic external application of massage techniques including touch, stroking, friction, vibration, percussion, kneading, stretching, compression, and joint movements within the normal physiologic range of motion; and adjunctive thereto, the external application of water, heat, cold, topical preparations, and mechanical devices.”

Florida’s definitions show an example of a variation that is uncommon. It states that “massage means the manipulation of the soft tissues of the human body with the hand, foot, arm, or elbow, whether or not such manipulation is aided by hydrotherapy, including colonic irrigation, or thermal therapy; any electrical or mechanical device; or the application to the human body of a chemical or

#### FOR YOUR INFORMATION 3–1

##### The Power Differential

In a spa setting, a **power differential** is defined as the authority a massage therapist is granted by a client, based on the client’s perception of the massage therapist as a knowledgeable and skilled health care provider. Take a moment to contemplate your relationship with these people: parent, boss, best friend, physician, teacher, counselor, spiritual leader, or spouse. Each of these relationships involves differing levels of trust, closeness, loyalty, respect, and responsibility. It is likely that you perceive some of these people as having more authority than you in some situations. For example, if you go to your spiritual leader to discuss a personal concern, you grant him or her the power of an advanced understanding of spiritual concepts. It is easy to assume that history teachers are more knowledgeable about history than other people or that dentists know more about teeth than other people. When clients make an appointment with a massage therapist, a power differential is at play in the relationship because the client assumes and respects the therapist’s understanding of soft tissue structures and manual techniques that reduce tension and pain. Furthermore, during the session, the client shares details of his or her personal health history and is situated at a level below the therapist, in a vulnerable reclining position, while unclothed under a drape. The therapist by virtue of his or her knowledge and skill in the area of massage is granted control of the situation, so he or she has a power advantage over the client.

Ethical massage therapists remain aware of the power differential and seek to minimize it as much as possible to ensure the mental, emotional, and physical safety of clients. When the power differential is minimized, clients are better able to

- Take an active role in the decision-making process to determine reasonable treatment goals.
- Alert a therapist to an uncomfortable technique or voice concerns.
- Give honest feedback on the quality of treatment or the effectiveness of sessions.
- Maintain their boundaries, personal power, and responsibility for health.
- Actively practice self-care activities and other types of therapy to augment the results achieved from massage or spa sessions.

You can actively minimize the power differential by listening carefully to clients and responding compassionately to their needs while representing the benefits of massage, spa treatments, and your personal skill level realistically. You can give clients choices about the types of techniques that might be used in the session and product options. If you remain attentive, you will notice when a client tenses because of discomfort and urge the client to speak up if a technique causes pain. Finally, you can encourage clients to seek out other therapists that might help them meet treatment goals and discuss self-care options that speed or enhance treatment outcomes.

In all cases, whether the client actively gives all of the power to the therapist or not, the therapist is always responsible for what happens in a session and must constantly strive to understand and minimize the power differential.

herbal preparation.” Colonic irrigation, also called colon hydrotherapy, or colonics, involves the low-pressure injection of water into the colon for cleansing purposes using a mechanical device. It is believed to flush toxic buildup out of the colon, leading to better overall health. This type of treatment is usually not included in the massage scope of practice.

### Restrictions to Scope of Practice

Usually, the definitions will list some of the restrictions to the practice of massage. Arizona definitions state that “practice of massage therapy means the application of massage therapy to any person for a fee or other consideration. Practice of massage therapy does not include the diagnosis of illness or disease, medical procedures, naturopathic manipulative medicine, osteopathic manipulative medicine, chiropractic adjustive procedures, homeopathic neuromuscular integration, electrical stimulation, ultrasound, prescription of medicines or the use of modalities for which a license to practice medicine, chiropractic, nursing, occupational therapy, athletic training, physical therapy, acupuncture or podiatry is required by law.”

You may notice that three primary restrictions to scope of practice come up repeatedly in massage law. Massage therapists cannot *diagnose* a patient’s condition, *prescribe* a medication or treatment, or *adjust* a client’s bones. Let’s look at each of these areas in more depth.

#### Diagnosing Is Out of Scope

Some therapists fall into diagnoses accidentally and do not realize the serious ramifications of their actions. The term *diagnose* means to identify an illness or disorder through an interview, physical examination, and medical tests. For example, a client may describe to the therapist a set of symptoms that the therapist recognizes as a particular soft tissue condition such as carpal tunnel syndrome. A therapist who says, “Oh, your condition is carpal tunnel syndrome and you need to take 1,200 mg of ibuprofen a day, wear a wrist splint, and receive treatment massage” has crossed the line and is diagnosing. Anytime the therapist labels a set of symptoms as a defined medical condition, he or she is diagnosing. Instead, the therapist should acknowledge the seriousness of the client’s symptoms and suggest the client visit a physician for a diagnosis.

#### Prescribing Is Out of Scope

The term *prescribe* means to direct a patient to follow a particular course of treatment, specifically to use a particular drug at set times, and in specified dosages. When the therapist in the example stated earlier advised the client to take 1,200 mg of ibuprofen a day and wear a wrist splint, he was prescribing. Therapists sometimes accidentally prescribe things such as herbal remedies or aromatherapy cures. To say to a client, “You should drink six glasses of peppermint tea a day for your stomach condition,” is prescribing. To suggest a client take supplements offered in the spa gift shop to improve health is prescribing. To explain to a client

that he or she must apply the aromatherapy balm four times a day for 2 weeks is prescribing.

Clients sometimes ignore messages from their bodies that indicate something is wrong. When a massage therapist listens, is empathetic, and suggests that a medical opinion be sought, it provides a space for the client to acknowledge his or her concerns and seek help.

#### Adjusting Bones Is Out of Scope

A chiropractor is a medical professional who adjusts bones to improve structural alignment and free nerve tissue, leading to better overall function. Sometimes, a client’s bones will shift naturally during the application of a massage stroke. This is normal and should not cause alarm. A therapist is working outside his or her scope of practice if he or she tries to get a bone to move. It is not uncommon for massage therapists to develop highly refined palpation skills. Sometimes, therapists can feel that a bone is not aligned normally. If a therapist attempts to shift the bone by using a thrusting movement or even holds in his or her mind the intent to move the bone with a massage stroke, he or she is working out of his or her scope of practice. Instead, the therapist should refer the client to a chiropractor.

#### Counseling Is Out of Scope

Another area where massage therapists may venture out of their scope of practice is counseling. People seek out counseling from a mental health care provider to gain insight into personal or psychological problems. It is not uncommon for clients to share personal issues with their massage therapists during sessions. This is not a scope of practice violation so long as the therapist listens compassionately but does not give advice or professional input. At other times, listening is not enough, and the client expresses a need for guidance or becomes emotional. The massage therapist must be very careful not to counsel the client or try to talk the client through the situation. If listening is not enough, the massage therapist should refer the client to a professional mental health care provider. In all cases, the massage therapist must know and understand the scope of practice and its restrictions in the state where he or she provides massage services.

#### Skin Care Is Out of Scope

The spa industry has grown so rapidly that this has created some confusion about the scope of practice for therapists delivering spa services. Much of this has centered on massage therapists and **estheticians** (people licensed to practice skin care). In many states, the board of cosmetology has raised concerns that massage therapists are encroaching on the scope of practice of estheticians when they provide such services as a seaweed wrap or body polish. On the other hand, in some states, massage therapists are concerned that estheticians are using massage techniques that manipulate soft tissue while applying products, so they are encroaching on the scope of practice for massage therapists.

The basis of such concerns is that many of the products used in the spa industry affect the physiological health

of the muscle tissue and body as well as the health and appearance of the skin. A seaweed wrap could be used for relaxation or as an active treatment to support a client with fibromyalgia, sore muscles, or low energy (general massage scope of practice). A seaweed wrap can also be used to soften, hydrate, and beautify the skin (general esthetics scope of practice). Body polishes stimulate local circulation to superficial soft tissue structures, tone muscle tissue, and increase the vital energy of the body as in a classic friction rub (general massage scope of practice). They are also an exfoliation treatment that deep cleans, softens, smooths, and beautifies the skin (general esthetics scope of practice).

This issue is further complicated because laws and regulations vary widely from state to state. A treatment that is within the scope of practice for massage therapists in some states may be banned for massage therapists in another state. For example, massage therapists cannot cleanse, exfoliate, mask, or tone the facial tissue in most states. They can apply creams or lotions (including essential oils) to the face to perform a massage. In many states, massage therapists cannot use the word *facial* even when describing a facial massage (they must say “face massage”). In a few states, however, massage therapists can provide facials using certain types of product only. Usually (but not always), massage therapists can use an exfoliation product such as salt on the body (except the face) to increase local circulation and relax muscle. Products such as seaweed and mud can be used to promote changes in soft tissue or for relaxation or revitalization.

In many states, estheticians cannot apply products with any stroke other than effleurage. They can use various strokes on the face, arms to the elbows, feet to the knees, and on the décolleté (upper chest) for beautification purposes only. They cannot manipulate soft tissue, so they should avoid strokes that lift, knead, or broaden the muscles. Again, in certain states, the previous statement is not true, and estheticians even receive training in full-body massage.

This textbook is written on the premise that spa body treatments are a shared practice. It assumes that massage therapists will focus on the benefits of a treatment for the body, and estheticians will focus on the benefits of the treatment for the skin. The treatment steps for the massage therapist may be the same steps that an esthetician uses, but the goals of the treatment (therapist’s intention) will be different. This may also be expressed in the promotional descriptions used to sell the treatments to the public. The massage therapist markets the benefits of the treatment for the body, whereas the esthetician markets the benefits of the treatment for the skin.

Throughout the treatment chapters, esthetically oriented information is included in “Broaden Your Understanding” boxes. This information has been separated from the main body of the text to avoid confusing new spa therapists who are still unclear about their scope of practice. Estheticians who are using the book as a reference will want to be aware

of the properties of products such as mud and seaweed for the skin. Massage therapists who want the broadest possible understanding of a treatment will also want to understand its implications for the skin, even though they will probably not market these effects to their clients.

Therapists should check to see if there are any treatments or practices that are not allowed by the regulatory body in the state where they are practicing. Both ABMP and the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) cover spa treatments delivered by massage therapists with some various restrictions. Call your professional association to check that your liability insurance policy covers the treatments you are offering.

Therapists who are trained both as massage therapists and as estheticians are growing in numbers. These therapists can market and deliver spa treatments for both the body and skin at the same time.

## Spa Sanitation and Hygiene

Spa therapists are required by health standards and professional ethics to provide a clean environment for clients that ensures they don’t pick up any diseases while they are at a spa or massage clinic. Therapists must understand how infectious diseases are spread and then adopt standard sanitation procedures to prevent the spread of these diseases. Sanitation protocols include therapist hygiene; the sanitation of the treatment room, equipment, and product containers; and general cleanness of the facility. The state board of massage, the state board of cosmetology, the state department of health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are useful sources of additional information for people working in spas or massage clinics.

## Diseases

A disease is defined as an infectious or noninfectious abnormal condition that results in medically significant symptoms and often has a known cause. Diseases may cause changes in the appearance, structure, or function of cells, tissues, organs, or systems in the human body. The signs and symptoms of diseases may result from the disease process itself or the immune system’s attempt to defeat an infectious agent. Such signs and symptoms include but are not limited to fever, nausea, elevated white blood cell count, fatigue, and cardiovascular and metabolic changes.

The terms *acute*, *subacute*, and *chronic* are often used to note a disease’s severity or stage. When a disease is in an acute stage, the symptoms are severe, and in some cases, the situation is more dangerous. The acute stage usually lasts a short time before the symptoms decrease, and the body enters a subacute stage. A chronic disease, persists for a long time or regularly recurs.

Types of diseases include autoimmune, cancerous, deficiency, genetic, metabolic, and infectious diseases. You



probably learned something about each of these disease types in your massage training so our focus here is a review to prevent the spread of infectious diseases in a spa environment.

### Infectious Diseases

Infectious diseases, also known as communicable diseases, are caused by an infectious agent referred to as a **pathogen**. The term *pathogen* comes from the Greek *pathos* meaning “suffering or disease” and *gen* meaning “producer.” Therefore, a pathogen is a producer of disease. The term refers to infectious organisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, and protozoa. Parasitic animals can also be passed from person to person or from animals to people and cause disease.

#### Bacteria

Bacteria are one-celled living organisms found in every environment on earth, including inside and outside the human body. They divide and multiply independently of a host and can thrive in almost any environment including on nonliving surfaces such as plastic. Most bacteria are not harmful, and many bacteria are necessary for good health. The immune system relies on probiotic bacteria (sometimes referred to as the intestinal flora), which live in the intestinal track. Probiotic bacteria aid normal food digestion and provide immune support against certain viruses, yeasts, parasites, and pathogenic bacteria.

Pathogenic bacteria such as *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) and *Salmonella enteritidis* (*Salmonella*) may enter the body through improperly handled food or unwashed hands (especially after toilet use) and cause food poisoning or acute diarrhea. *Staphylococcus aureus* is the species of bacteria that causes “staph” infections. It commonly lives harmlessly on the skin and hair and around the nose. It can potentially be passed to massage clients by therapists who touched their own hair or nose and then touched a client without first decontaminating their hands. If staph gets into a cut and rapidly reproduces, it may cause serious infection and blood poisoning. *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, known informally as pneumococcus, causes pneumonia when it is inhaled into the lungs and cannot be cleared. Its relative, *Streptococcus pyogenes*, causes “strep throat” among many other diseases. Pathogenic bacteria normally live on the skin and hair, in the nose, throat, and lungs or in the intestines without causing a problem. They infect the body only when its defenses are low or when the pathogenic bacterium suddenly comes into contact with vulnerable tissue.<sup>1</sup>

Rickettsiae and chlamydiae are smaller than bacteria but still classified as bacteria. These pathogens are parasites that must live inside a cell at the expense of their hosts. In most instances, these organisms are transmitted through the bites of insects such as lice, ticks, and fleas. Rickettsiae are responsible for a number of serious diseases such as typhus and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Chlamydiae cause trachoma, an eye infection that causes blindness; the

sexually transmitted diseases chlamydia and lymphogranuloma venereum; and some respiratory diseases.

#### Viruses

Viruses are smaller than bacteria and cannot self-replicate or self-reproduce outside a living host cell (plant, animal, or human). To grow and spread, they effectively take over the host cell, causing the cell nucleus to replicate both its own genetic material and that of the virus. The cell is usually eventually destroyed when it ruptures, and the new viral particles formed are released into the extracellular fluid to infect more cells. Viruses mutate quickly, making them difficult to treat effectively. Some viruses lie dormant in cells until a stimulus or a decline in the host’s defenses activates them. Some persistent viruses, such as HIV which causes AIDS, can enter or exit a cell without killing it.

Viruses are present in infected body fluids such as blood, saliva, or droplets from the nose, mouth, or genitalia. They are transmitted person to person or animal to person. Although most viruses cannot live long without a host, some, such as the herpes simplex virus, can linger on surfaces for several hours and infect a person via indirect contact. This is one reason why the proper sanitation of linens and equipment in a spa environment is so important (discussed below).

#### Fungi

Fungi, which include molds and yeasts, comprise a large group of simple plantlike organisms that are larger and more complex than bacteria. Warm, moist environments promote the reproduction of fungi through simple cell division and the production of large numbers of spores.

A common fungus, *Candida albicans*, is present in the mouth, mucous membranes, vagina, and rectum. It can also travel through the bloodstream and affect the throat, intestines, and heart valves. *Candida* becomes dangerous when some change in the body environment allows it to grow out of control. When it grows out of control in the mouth, it is called thrush. When it grows out of control in the vagina, it’s often called a yeast infection or vaginitis. In individuals with low resistance due to other diseases such as leukemia or AIDS, *Candida* can enter the bloodstream and cause a serious infection in vital organs.

A group of related fungi cause skin infections characterized by red, scaly patches known commonly as ringworm, but despite the name, it is not caused by a worm (Fig. 3–1). Ringworm might be found on the skin (*tinea corporis*), scalp (*tinea capitis*), around the groin (*tinea cruris*, sometimes called jock itch), or feet (*tinea pedis*, most often called athlete’s foot). Ringworm is highly contagious and is transmitted via skin-to-skin contact or contact with contaminated items such as unwashed sheets, flooring, and combs. Therapists who practice spa treatments or massage barefoot can pass an undetected fungal infection to clients or pick up a fungal infection when clients walk barefoot in the same area.



**FIGURE 3-1** A group of related fungi cause skin infections characterized by red, scaly patches known commonly as ringworm, but despite the name, it is not caused by a worm. Ringworm might be found on the skin (tinea corporis), scalp (tinea capitis), around the groin (tinea cruris, sometimes called jock itch), or feet (tinea pedis, most often called athlete's foot).

### Protozoa

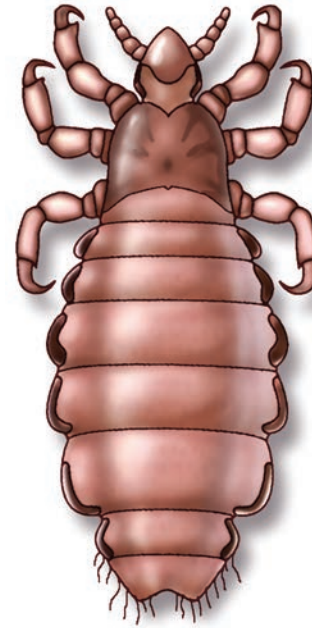
Protozoa (from the Greek *protos* meaning “first” and *zoon* meaning “animal”) is a single-celled organism regarded as the simplest form of animal life. They grow in moist environments such as fresh water, marine environments, decaying organic matter, wet grass, and mud. Protozoa cause diseases such as amoebic dysentery, which is usually contracted through contaminated water or food; African sleeping sickness, which is spread by the tsetse fly; and malaria, which is transmitted by the anopheles mosquito.

### Parasitic Animals

The parasitic animals of most concern to massage therapists are mites and lice because they are spread very easily through direct contact or contact with infected sheets and clothing. Lice and mites do not carry infectious bacteria, viruses, or fungi to the host. Instead, their wastes cause intense itching that leads the host to scratch the skin, leaving it open to more serious infection.

#### Lice

Head lice (*Pediculus humanus capitis*), body lice (*Pediculus humanus*), and pubic lice (*Phthirus pubis*—often called crabs) suck the blood of the host and cause itching (Fig. 3-2). Head lice often spread among grade school children and must be treated with repeated applications of special shampoos. A fine-tooth comb is passed through the hair to remove eggs. Body lice live in the seams of clothing rather than directly on the host. This type of lice is usually seen in homeless people who do not have regular access to laundering facilities. Body lice are transmitted through unwashed



**FIGURE 3-2** Head lice (*Pediculus humanus capitis*), body lice (*Pediculus humanus*), and pubic lice (*Phthirus pubis*—often called crabs) suck the blood of the host and cause itching.

clothing but could be passed from clothing to massage sheets. Pubic lice are nicknamed “crabs” because of their crab-like appearance. They are usually spread through sexual contact but might also be spread to clothing or linens. Although they tend to inhabit the groin area, they can live in any coarse body hair (armpits, eyebrows).

#### Mites

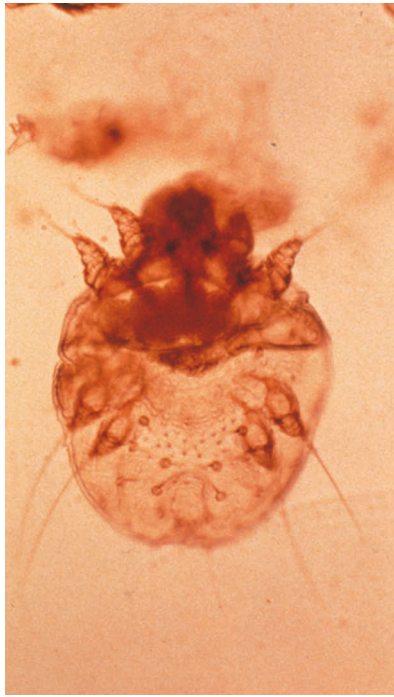
**Mites** (*Sarcoptes scabiei*) like warm, moist areas of the body, especially skinfolds. They burrow under the skin and live off the blood of the host (Fig. 3-3). Mite infestations are often referred to as scabies. The excrement of the mite is highly irritating and leads to itchy, red allergic reactions. Like lice, mite infestations are highly contagious and spread through person-to-person contact or from clothing and linens.

If a lice or mite infestation occurs at your massage clinic (e.g., a client calls to say she just found out that she has lice), cancel all appointments until the facility can be deep cleaned. Wash in hot water and detergent any linens or cloth materials that may have come into contact with the infected person and then dry them with heat. Vacuum carpeted floors carefully and change bath mats and towels in the bathroom. Mop hard floors and wipe down all hard surfaces. Lice and mites live only about 38 hours off the host, but care should be taken that they are not spread to an unsuspecting client.

### How Diseases Are Transmitted

An infectious pathogen must breach the body's defenses to cause a disease. Some pathogens, called opportunistic pathogens, cause disease only if the host's immune system is depressed. Others, called virulent pathogens, readily





**FIGURE 3-3** Mites (*Sarcoptes scabiei*) like warm, moist areas of the body, especially skinfolds. They burrow under the skin and live off the blood of the host.

cause disease when they gain entrance to the body. Pathogens are transmitted by direct contact, indirect contact, vehicle transmission, or **vector transmission**.

### Direct Contact

The sweat and sebum in skin provide some natural protection against the transfer of pathogens via **direct contact** of the skin. But if the skin is damaged by cuts, scrapes, wounds, burns, or even dryness that leaves the skin with microscopic breaks, the chances of infection increase.

Pathogens often reside around areas with mucous membranes such as the nose, lips, eyes, gastrointestinal tract, genitourinary tract, genital area, and anus. Lymph tissue such as the tonsils, mucus, and cilia provides some protection for the mouth and respiratory system. Other mucous membranes provide less protection.

An infected person can transfer a pathogen to an uninfected person through touch, sexual contact such as kissing or intercourse, or expelling body fluid droplets onto a person by sneezing, coughing, or touching mucous membranes and then touching an uninfected person without having washed the hands.

### Indirect Contact

An infected individual can transfer a pathogen to an inanimate object (known as a fomite) such as a countertop, door-knob, toy, or magazine. A person might touch his or her nose or mouth and then touch the fomite, sneeze or cough on a fomite, or fail to wash his or her hands after using the toilet and then touch a fomite. The pathogen lingers on the

fomite where an uninfected person touches it obtaining the pathogen via **indirect contact**.

### Vehicle Transmission

Air, food, and liquid that are routinely taken into the body provide a mode of transport for pathogens. This type of pathogen transmission is called **vehicle transmission**. Pathogens can travel in the air in droplets (usually mucous droplets such as are released by a sneeze), aerosols (very small droplets that may have evaporated from droplets on a surface), or dust particles. This is why people often get sick after flying on a plane; because cabin air is recycled, pathogens have repeated opportunities to infect passengers.

A number of pathogens are found in food. If these pathogens are not killed during food processing, they are transmitted directly to the gastrointestinal tract. Bacteria in the intestinal flora of animals may be safe for those animals but unsafe for humans. For example, *Salmonella* is part of normal chicken intestinal flora but can cause serious illness in humans if it is not destroyed during food preparation. The food preparer may also be infected and transfer pathogens to otherwise uncontaminated food.

In the United States, drinking water is generally safe, but if the water supply is contaminated with human or animal fecal matter (e.g., sewage), it may cause serious illness. Homes and businesses with a private well should have the water tested annually to ensure its safety. Pathogenic organisms as well as harmful chemicals such as lead and radioactive isotopes such as radon can enter well water and cause health problems.

### Vector Transmission

Vectors are insects or animals capable of transmitting diseases, including mosquitoes, flies, fleas, ticks, mites, rats, dogs, and cats. Vectors are mobile and can easily spread a disease to previously uninfected areas. The vector usually breaks the skin through a bite or sting but may also cause disease through its feces. A pathogen might be located on the outside surface of a vector and spread through physical contact with food or a surface when it lands (e.g., flies).

## Preventing the Transmission of Disease

It is impossible to know if a client who walks in through the door of your business is infected with a pathogen. Similarly, you may be infected and not know it. Because pathogens that cause serious illness are all around us, sanitation and hygiene practices are required at all times to prevent the spread of disease. These practices include therapist hygiene; sanitation of equipment, supplies, and the building; and the use of universal precautions.

### Therapist Hygiene

As health care providers, spa therapists must adhere to the highest standards of personal hygiene. This includes cleanliness of the body and hair; wearing clean, appropriate

clothing; removing jewelry; proper hand washing; and attending to issues such as smoking and illness.

### Cleanliness of Body and Hair

Shower daily and wash your hair on work days. Avoid the use of scented antiperspirants, perfumes, colognes, aftershave, and body care products because these may cause sensitivity or allergies in some clients. As described earlier, the hair can act as a reservoir for pathogens such as *Staphylococcus aureus* and must be tied back so that it does not touch the client during the delivery of a spa treatment or massage. Men should shave before each work shift or keep facial hair neatly trimmed. If you touch your own hair during a session, including facial hair, you must sanitize your hands before touching the client.

For better hygiene and client comfort, keep your nails short, natural, and filed to a smooth edge. Long nails, nail polish, and artificial nails are breeding grounds for pathogens and may scratch a client; they are best avoided. Brush and floss your teeth before the shift and directly after eating food during breaks in the day. Because therapists and clients come into close contact during spa treatments, it is a good idea to rinse your mouth with mouthwash before each new client.

Therapists who perspire heavily while giving spa treatments can wear sweatbands on the forehead and wrist to prevent droplets of perspiration from falling onto the client. A clean towel can be used to absorb perspiration throughout the session if necessary.

### Clean and Appropriate Clothing

Laundry your work uniform or clothing at the end of each working day. Short sleeves are better for spa work because long sleeves, which may touch the client's skin and become contaminated, may then contaminate the next client. Although many therapists like to work barefoot, this is not advised. Your feet may harbor an undetected fungal infection, which can be spread to an unknowing client getting on and off massage table or wet table. For clients with suppressed immunity, this may cause serious complications. Remove jewelry including rings, wristwatches, bracelets, and necklaces. These items contain small crevices and sharp edges that can harbor bacteria or potentially scratch a client. Small earrings that will not touch the client are fine.

### Proper Hand Washing

Proper sanitation of the hands is probably the single most important part of the sanitation protocol for therapists (For Your Exploration 3-2). You need to clean your nails carefully and use foaming liquid soap to thoroughly wash your hands up to your elbows. An alcohol-based hand rub is recommended for decontaminating the hands before the session, before or after certain treatment steps, and at the end of a session. Non-alcohol-based hand rubs have not been adequately evaluated by the CDC and are therefore not recommended. In those instances where you use gloves (see the upcoming section for details), wash your hands and decontaminate them before putting gloves on and immediately

after removing gloves. Decontaminate your hands with an alcohol rub before moving from a potentially contaminated body area (such as the feet) to a clean body area (such as the face) during a spa treatment or massage. Do the same when moving from contact with an unsanitized inanimate object (e.g., a product container) to the client. As well, wash and decontaminate your hands before and after eating or using the restroom.<sup>2</sup> The CDC provides specific recommendations for hand washing and the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers for health care workers, as described in For Your Information 3-2 and Figure 3-4.

### Therapists Who Are Smokers

The smell of cigarette smoke lingers in hair, on clothing, on skin, on the breath, on carpets, and on fabrics such as window treatments and linens. Smokers often become oblivious to the smoke odor and do not realize its impact on nonsmoking individuals. Many nonsmokers intensely dislike the smell of cigarette smoke. Some are so sensitive that they cannot tolerate the lingering smell of smoke anywhere around them. Even clients who can tolerate the smoke odor often associate it with an environment that is unclean, so they may subconsciously feel uncomfortable.

Smoking should never be allowed in the treatment room, reception area, bathrooms, hallways, office area, or laundry area of a spa business. Therapists who smoke must strive to balance their personal needs with the client's needs. In the best case, a therapist would smoke before showering, washing the hair, dressing, and brushing the teeth. After showering and dressing, the therapist would not smoke again until after all of that day's spa sessions. A therapist who is unable to finish the day's spa sessions before having a cigarette must make every effort to minimize the impact on clients. Use a mechanic's jumpsuit to cover and protect clothing. Cover your hair with a plastic shower cap and put hand lotion on your hands before handling cigarettes (which rinses away when the hands are washed and keeps smoke odor from seeping into skin). Smoke outside at a good distance away from the spa business. After smoking, wash any areas of skin that might come into contact with smoke. You might include the use of a salt scrub on your hands to help eliminate the smell of smoke. Your face, neck, arms, and hands should all be washed. Brush your teeth and rinse with mouthwash.

### Therapists Who Are Sick or Have Allergies

A therapist who is sick or may have a contagious infection must protect clients by canceling all spa appointments. The common cold is caused by a large number of different viruses and is easily transmitted through the air or by direct contact. In general, the viruses that cause colds incubate in the body for 12 hours to 5 days and then become contagious 23 hours before the onset of symptoms. The person remains contagious for about 5 days after the onset of symptoms.<sup>3</sup>

Therapists with allergies with symptoms similar to those of a cold are not likely to be contagious but may need to take extra precautions to prevent spreading pathogens.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION 3-2

Proper Hand Washing and Hand Decontamination



1. Clean your nails before your hands using an orange stick or a personal nailbrush that has not been used by anybody else. Wash your hands with a non-antimicrobial soap or an antimicrobial soap (liquid soap with a pump dispenser is the most sanitary—avoid bar soap) for 30 seconds using friction and lather to lift contaminants off the skin's surface.

2. Clean the area between your fingers and from your forearms up to your elbows. Rinse your arms and hands thoroughly with running water and dry them with a disposable towel.

3. Use the same towel to turn off the water tap and to open any doors on the way to the treatment room.



## FOR YOUR INFORMATION 3-2

## Proper Hand Washing and Hand Decontamination (continued)



4. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer at these times: **(A)** Directly after washing your hands and directly before touching the client. **(B)** Directly after washing your hands and directly before donning gloves and directly after removing gloves. **(C)** Directly after moving from a potentially contaminated body area (e.g., feet) and directly before working on a clean body area (e.g., face). **(D)** Directly after touching an unsanitized inanimate object (e.g., product container) and directly before touching the client. **(E)** If you accidentally touch your hair or a mucous membrane (eyes, nose) or cough or sneeze during the session. Do not retouch the client until your hands have been decontaminated with the hand sanitizer. **(F)** Directly after removing soiled linens from the table and directly before handling fresh linens.

For example, if your eyes are itchy and watering, you must decontaminate your hands if you rub your eyes in the middle of a session. If sneezing is a problem, wear a face mask as an extra precaution. Inform clients that you suffer from allergies to prevent the impression that you are sick. If you are uncertain whether your symptoms are those of a cold or allergy, take your temperature. Allergies usually do not elevate body temperature, whereas even a low-grade cold will.

### Sanitation of the Facility, Equipment, and Supplies

A clean facility has a lower risk of pathogen transmission. To provide a clean environment, pay attention to the proper use of cleaning products, sanitation of the treatment room and equipment, care of linens, proper product handling, and general housekeeping activities.

#### Cleaning Products

A variety of cleaning products can be used in the spa business. Use dusting aids and wood polishes on wood surfaces and glass cleaners on windows and mirrors. Antiseptics and disinfectants are the most important types of cleaners used in a health care setting because they reduce the transmission of disease. These types of cleaners are described in detail below.

Note that cleaning products often contain ingredients that cause irritation to eyes, the skin, and the respiratory

system. Wear heavy cleaning gloves, a face mask, and eye protection when handling cleaning products and increase the ventilation in rooms where you are cleaning by opening windows or running ceiling fans. Many cleaning products also cause damage to the environment. In recent years, interest has increased in using natural, environmentally friendly products for cleaning. Finding suitable products is often difficult because of the unique challenges of sanitation in health care environments. Some U.S. and Canadian health care workers have formed an association called Health Care Without Harm: The Campaign for Environmentally Responsible Healthcare. This group offers a kit to help health care providers “go green.” The kit can be ordered through their website at <http://www.noharm.org/goingGreen>. At the very least, avoid heavily scented cleaning products and look up cleaning product dangers at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) website at <http://www.osha.gov>.

#### Antiseptics

**Antiseptics** are safe for use on the skin and create an unfavorable environment for pathogen reproduction. Antiseptics are weaker than disinfectants and do not kill some types of pathogens but are generally appropriate for use in a spa setting so long as no blood or body fluid is present. Hand soap, iodine, hydrogen peroxide, and rubbing alcohol are commonly used antiseptics. Rubbing alcohol is often used to spray clean countertops, doorknobs, and spa equipment in between clients.



**FIGURE 3-4** Proper use of gloves. **(A)** Directly before putting on gloves, wash your hands as described in the section on “Therapist Hygiene,” and decontaminate your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. The gloves should fit snugly and not roll down your hands while giving massage. When it is time to remove the gloves, peel the first glove from the wrist to the fingers so that it is turned inside out. Any contaminants are now on the inside of the glove away from you. **(B)** Place the fingers of your ungloved hand inside the second glove and peel it back so that it is inside out. Make an effort not to touch the outside of the gloves with your ungloved hand. Dispose of the gloves in a closed trash container and immediately wash and decontaminate your hands with alcohol after removing the gloves.

### Disinfectants

**Disinfectants** are stronger than antiseptics and should not be used on the skin. They kill or are effective against most bacteria and viruses. Disinfectants are also called germicides and bactericides. Commonly used disinfectants include bleach solutions, phenols, and quaternary ammonium compounds (quats). Disinfectants are used for deep cleaning at the end of the day, if an infectious agent may be present (e.g., if a client denied having a cold but sneezed and coughed throughout the session) or if blood or body fluids are present.

- **Bleach solutions:** Bleach mixed with water in a 10% concentration is used to clean hard surfaces such as countertops, equipment, and floors and to clean linens exposed to body fluids. It is noted to be effective on pathogens

including *Staphylococcus*, *Streptococcus*, hepatitis, HIV, herpes, and tinea (the fungus that causes ringworm).

- **Phenols (also called cresols):** Phenols are used on hard surfaces and are effective against tuberculosis, bacteria, fungus, herpes, and the flu virus. Phenols are irritating for skin and the respiratory system.
- **Quaternary ammonium compounds (quats):** Quats are formulated to kill pathogens on a variety of hard surfaces and are effective against pseudomonas, *Staphylococcus* and *Salmonella*, certain bacteria, HIV, and the hepatitis B and C viruses.

**Sterilization** is the elimination of all microorganisms on and in an object through heat, chemical substances, or irradiation. Sterilization is rarely used in massage environments but might be used in a spa environment. It is

commonly used in hospitals where moist heat (hot water or steam) or dry heat is used to sterilize medical instruments. Sterilization with an autoclave (a device in which high temperature and pressure is used to sterilize instruments) may be used in some spa environments where estheticians use sharp implements to pierce the superficial layers of the skin when performing deep cleaning facials that include extractions of whiteheads and blackheads.

### Sanitation of the Treatment Room and Equipment

Sanitizing the treatment room and equipment involves a cleaning step that removes visible dirt and a sanitation step that removes most pathogenic organisms from inanimate objects with an antiseptic. Follow these guidelines:

- Wipe down countertops, equipment, treatment chairs and tables, the floor, and any other hard surface such as doorknobs, handles, and cabinets with an antiseptic such as alcohol between clients.
- If possible, open windows and doors to ventilate the room and circulate air.
- At the end of the day, deep clean the treatment room, equipment, and hard surfaces with a disinfectant.
- Usually, a sick client is sent home without receiving a spa treatment. If you suspect that a client was on the verge of a cold or the flu, deep clean the treatment room with a disinfectant before proceeding with the next session.
- Regularly dust window blinds, shelves, decorative items, picture frames, and lamp fixtures. Keep electronic equipment and CDs neatly organized and free from dust.
- Wash all reusable equipment such as metal or plastic bowls, spatulas, application brushes used in spa treatments, and soda coolers (used to hold hot towels) in hot, soapy water and sanitize them with alcohol between clients.

Specialized equipment such as foot soaking basins, hydrotherapy tubs, showers, and massage tools such as hot stones used in stone massage must be cleaned and sanitized with a disinfectant between clients. Foot soaking basins are of special concern especially if they have jets that might harbor bacteria:

- Wash them with hot, soapy water and spray them with a disinfectant.
- Allow the disinfectant to remain for 10 minutes and then wipe the basin dry.
- If the basin has jets, flush a bleach solution through the jets to eliminate pathogens.

Follow these guidelines for cleaning a shower:

- Clean, disinfect, and dry the shower after use by each client.
- Disinfect the shower curtain or door and the floor outside the shower.
- Change all towels and the mat outside the shower for each client.
- Use only liquid soaps or shower gels. Bars of soap that have been used by more than one person are unsanitary and should not be left in the shower or sink.

Modern hydrotherapy tubs usually have a self-cleaning function that makes sanitizing the jets of the tub easier:

- Put a concentrated disinfectant (formulated by the manufacturer of the tub) into the special holder and then push the button.
- At the end of the cleaning cycle, dry the tub and put out fresh bath mats and towels for the next client.
- Between clients, wipe down the area around the tub, including the floor and any handrails, with an antiseptic, and deep clean the area with a disinfectant at the end of the day.

Small, one-person steam cabinets should be completely wiped with an antiseptic between clients. For larger steam rooms or steam showers, sanitize the floor and seat between clients, although the walls can be left until the end of the day. Disinfect this equipment at the end of each workday.

### Proper Care of Linens

Clean linens are stored in a closed cabinet until they are brought out for use. Decontaminate your hands after touching soiled linens and before placing fresh linens on the table. Linens may include massage sheets, face cradle covers, bolster and pillow covers, uniforms, smocks, hair wraps, robes, washable slippers, blankets, draping material, and washable floor mats. Any item that comes into contact with the client's skin or hair during the session must be stored in a closed, ventilated container and washed before use with another client. Soiled linens should not be stored in the treatment room but should be moved to the laundry or work area. At the end of the day, wash linens in hot water with regular detergent, dry them with heat, and return them to the closed cabinet. Handle linens soiled with body fluids with special caution as discussed in the upcoming section on "Universal Precautions."

### Proper Product Handling

Keep lubricants and special treatment products refrigerated between uses to prevent the breakdown of their natural oils or therapeutic properties. Transfer lubricants used for massage from larger, bulk containers to smaller bottles so that they can be heated without damaging the unused product, which would break down if heated, cooled, and reheated. Some products are dispensed directly into your hand using a pump top or flip lid. Take care to decontaminate the pump container with an antiseptic both before and after each session.

Remove spa products from their original closed containers with a sanitized spoon or spatula and placed them in pre-sanitized holders for later use during the treatment. Cover the spa product with plastic wrap to avoid contamination before use. All products would become contaminated if you used your hands to remove the product or dip into the original container during the treatment. Discard any unused spa product rather than return it to the original container. During a body treatment, proper waste disposal procedures are important. Some items used in the treatment are used only once (e.g., gauze, sponges, and plastic body wrap). Dispose of these items in a closed trash can immediately after use.



## Housekeeping Activities

The general cleanliness of the facility must be assessed and maintained on a daily basis. The reception area, retail area, office area, hallways, and bathrooms all need attention.

- Vacuum or sweep and mop floors daily.
- Wipe items such as coffee tables, beverage dispensers, toys in the reception area, doorknobs, handrails, and the reception countertops daily with an antiseptic.
- Deep clean bathrooms and empty trash bins at the end of each work day.
- Clean window ledges, retail shelving, picture frames, and light fixtures weekly.
- Fish tanks and water fountains are not advised because they may harbor pathogens and are difficult to keep clean.

Think also about the safe use of food items in the business. Home-baked products are not advised, but individually wrapped items such as chocolates, granola bars, sports bars, and popsicles can be used. It's a good idea to provide filtered water from commercial dispensers. These water containers come presealed to prevent contamination. Use disposable cups for all beverages including tea, juice, or water. Table 3-2 provides a checklist of tasks to ensure you maintain a clean, sanitary, and safe facility.

## Universal Precautions

The purpose of **universal precautions** is to ensure that health care workers protect themselves from blood-borne diseases transmitted through broken skin, mucous

membranes, or contact with blood and body fluid. To understand universal precautions, it is helpful to understand HIV/AIDS and hepatitis, to know when to use gloves, and to know the proper methods for cleaning up body fluids and items exposed to body fluids.

## HIV/AIDS

HIV causes AIDS. HIV is transmitted through body fluids including semen, vaginal secretions, and blood and can be transmitted during pregnancy from a mother to her fetus or after birth through breast milk. HIV can also be spread by drug users sharing a needle, by accidental needle pricks, and from infected blood used in a blood transfusion (rare in developed countries). There is no evidence that HIV is transmitted through saliva, sweat, tears, urine, or feces unless the fluid contains blood. There is no evidence that HIV is spread through casual contact such as sharing towels, food utensils, telephones, or swimming pools. HIV is not believed to spread by biting insects such as mosquitoes or fleas.<sup>3</sup>

HIV is a retrovirus that can live in the infected individual for a long time before causing symptoms. The National Institute for Allergies and Infectious Diseases reports that people infected with HIV develop a flulike illness 1 to 2 months after their initial exposure to HIV. The symptoms are often mistaken for another viral infection and clear up within a week or two. Severe symptoms may not appear for 10 years or longer. (Children born with HIV develop symptoms around the age of 2 years.) During this period, HIV is slowly multiplying and killing immune system cells. Gradually, infected people experience periodic symptoms

TABLE 3-2 Tasks to Ensure a Clean, Sanitary, and Safe Facility

AFTER EACH SESSION	END OF BUSINESS DAY	WEEKLY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Open doors and windows to ventilate room.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Remove soiled linen from table, face cradle, bolsters, etc.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wipe massage table, face cradle, and bolster with disinfectant.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cover table, face cradle, and bolsters with fresh linens.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Disinfect countertops, door handles, and any objects clients regularly touch.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Disinfect the lubricant container or bottles used to hold spa product.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If tools (hot stones, massage tools, etc.) were used during the session, wipe them with a disinfectant.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If a shower or wet room has been used, it must be disinfected and dried.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If a hydrotherapy tub or foot basin with jets has been used, the jets must be flushed with bleach or the manufacturer's recommended cleaner and dried.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Change bath mats and towels if shower or tub has been used.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wash all bowls, implements, application brushes, trays, and other equipment with hot, soapy water and wipe with a disinfectant before storing them in closed containers.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wash cloth products such as massage sheets, blankets, robes, slippers, hand towels, bath towels, and shower mats in hot water with detergent and dry using heat before storing in a closed container.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Deep clean and disinfect bathrooms.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clean floors, clean and disinfect items in the reception area, clean any beverage service items, clean common areas, and disinfect items such as handrails and doorknobs.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Empty and disinfect trash bins.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clean windows, window frames, and window ledges.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Deep clean the reception area and wipe down chairs, the beverage service, magazines, and decorative side tables.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wipe down shelving used to hold retail items and dust retail items.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dust light fixtures, picture frames, the music system, shelving, and decorative items in the treatment room.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Organize CDs, storage cabinets, and supplies.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Check smoke detectors to ensure they are in good working order.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Check and replace light bulbs both inside and outside the facility.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Water and dust plants.</li> </ul>

such as swollen glands, decreased energy, weight loss, fevers and night sweats, persistent yeast infections, short-term memory loss, persistent pelvic inflammatory disease, frequent and severe herpes outbreaks, and shingles.

An HIV infection is called AIDS when the HIV-infected person has fewer than 200 CD3+T cells (the immune system's primary infection fighting blood cells). Uninfected adults usually have 1,000 or more CD3+T cells. The immune system, gradually destroyed by HIV, loses its ability to fight off common pathogens that usually do not cause illness in healthy individuals. In people with AIDS, these opportunistic infections can be severe and often are fatal. People with AIDS are also prone to developing various cancers, especially those caused by viruses and cancers of the immune system (lymphomas).

Massage and many spa treatments are safe for HIV-positive clients who do not have symptoms. In the advanced stages of AIDS, many forms of bodywork or spa treatments may still be safe, but the most effective techniques depend on the individual client's level of health. It is unlikely that a therapist would contract HIV from a client during the delivery of a spa treatment or massage, but the use of universal precautions is required. This is especially important because an HIV-positive client must be protected from an undetected infection the therapist may have.

### Hepatitis

Several different viruses cause different forms of hepatitis, termed hepatitis A through G. These are diseases characterized by inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis A, B, and C are the most common forms.

- **Hepatitis A virus (HAV):** HAV is transmitted through contaminated food and water or by contact with feces. It usually resolves in a few weeks without medical intervention.
- **Hepatitis B virus (HBV):** HBV is spread through many of the same routes as HIV but is a hundred times more contagious than HIV. Many people who contract hepatitis B recover fully and have no long-term complications. Some individuals develop chronic hepatitis B and become carriers of the disease. These people may develop varicose veins on the stomach and esophagus, cirrhosis of the liver, and liver cancer.<sup>4</sup>
- **Hepatitis C:** Hepatitis C is transmitted primarily through contact with infected blood (often by drug users sharing needles). Hepatitis C spreads less commonly through sexual contact and childbirth, but these are possible routes. Of people who contract hepatitis C, 75% to 95% develop chronic long-term infections and have an increased risk for cirrhosis and liver cancer.<sup>5</sup>

Spa treatments and massage are contraindicated for individuals with acute hepatitis. Clients with chronic hepatitis can benefit from many spa treatments, but techniques should be chosen based on the individual's level of health. Universal precautions are required.

### When to Use Universal Precautions

Spa therapists rarely make contact with clients' body fluids in practice, but in some situations, a therapist may be exposed to a body fluid and therefore be at risk for infection. A scab may rub off during the application of a product, a blemish may erupt under the pressure of a massage stroke, menstrual blood may leak onto the treatment table, or a client may experience nausea during treatment and vomit in the treatment room. Universal precautions are an approach to infection control in which all blood and body fluids are treated as if infected with HIV, hepatitis, or another bloodborne pathogen. Universal precautions are guidelines for dealing with broken skin and mucous membranes, blood and other body fluids, and the cleanup of body fluids. Important components of universal precautions include the following:

- Correctly using gloves
- Properly cleaning linen soiled with blood or body fluids
- Properly cleaning surfaces contaminated with blood or body fluids

### Use of Gloves

Vinyl gloves are worn to protect both the client and therapist from the transmission of disease. Wear gloves at these times:

- Any time the potential exists to come into direct contact with blood or body fluid
- If the client has broken skin such as a scratch, open cut, or blemish
- If you have broken skin on your hands or forearms, such as a scratch, hangnail, or blemish
- If you are likely to come into contact with mucous membranes; this is rare in a spa environment, but in some states, intraoral massage is sometime used with conditions such as temporomandibular joint disorder
- When you are cleaning linens or hard surfaces soiled with blood or body fluids
- If the client is HIV-positive or has a condition that causes weakened immunity
- If you are HIV-positive or a hepatitis carrier

Wear gloves also any time you are concerned about the potential for infection or the client requests it.

Latex gloves break down when exposed to oil-based lubricants such as those used in massage. Latex may also cause a mild to very serious allergic reaction or skin sensitivity. For this reason, vinyl gloves are recommended. Vinyl gloves do not break down when exposed to oil-based lubricants or spa products and seldom cause allergic reactions or skin sensitivity.

### Proper Cleanup of Soiled Linen

Linens soiled with blood or body fluids should be handled with gloves and stored in a leakproof bag until they can be laundered. Wash these linens separately with laundry detergent and chlorine bleach. Dry them with heat and store them as normal in a closed cabinet.

### Proper Cleanup of Blood or Body Fluids on Hard Surfaces

Add one part bleach to nine parts water (10% bleach solution) to clean hard surfaces contaminated with blood or body fluid. Wear gloves and use disposable cleaning materials such as paper towels to wipe up the spill. Dispose of the cleaning materials in a closed trash container.

Because new information about communicable diseases is issued often, keep up-to-date about the most recent standards and guidelines issued by the CDC (<http://www.cdc.gov>).

## Creating a Safe Environment

Injury or harm is unlikely to happen in a safe environment. In such an environment, conditions that may cause injury have been eliminated. Procedures are adopted to increase security and plans made to efficiently handle any accidents that may occur. The safety plan should include guidelines for ensuring the safety of both clients and therapists. If you decide to open your own practice, you have greater control over safety issues than if you work as an employee. As an employee, maintain your awareness of safety issues and alert your supervisor should you feel that the environment is not conducive to your safety and/or the safety of your clients.

### Safety of the Facility

The facility must be accessible to a wide array of clients, including those who are unsteady on their feet and those using wheelchairs. Assess the parking area, common areas, equipment, and fire plan:

- **Parking area:** Begin an assessment of the facility in the parking area. Is the pavement smooth and even, or are cracks or an uneven surface present that may cause a client to fall? Is lighting adequate and the pathway to the front door unobstructed? If clients must climb stairs or use a wheelchair ramp, are these areas well lit and handrails provided?
- **Common areas:** All common areas such as the reception area, hallways, and bathrooms should have good lighting and nonslip flooring and be free of area rugs (which may cause a client to trip) and barriers. Bathrooms should include a lavatory at wheelchair height and handrails. Doorways should be wide enough to accommodate people with physical disabilities, and lever-style door handles used.
- **Equipment:** Regularly check equipment to ensure that it is in good working condition. Check bolts, hinges, and knobs for tightness before each spa session. Any exposed electrical cords should be heavy-duty and taped down around the edges of the room, behind furnishings and equipment when possible. Do not run extension cords across a doorway or in any area where therapists or clients must walk.

- **Fire plan:** Check with state authorities to ensure that proper fire and safety codes are followed. At least one fire extinguisher and smoke detector should be in clear view; more are likely needed. Check the fire extinguisher and all smoke and heat detectors monthly to ensure they are in good working order. A fire escape route should be clearly indicated in every room. The use of candles, incense, and open flames is not advised.
- **Emergency numbers:** Keep a list of emergency phone numbers by the business phone. This includes the local fire station, poison control center, police department, ambulance, and local hospital or emergency medical facility. Keep your liability insurance coverage up-to-date and display a copy on the premises.

### Safety of the Client

To ensure the safety of the client, stay up-to-date with your training in CPR and first aid. A first aid kit should be kept in each treatment room along with hydrocortisone cream, which can be used to decrease any skin reactions to spa products. Never give a spa treatment without first taking a thorough health history. If you have any concern that a spa treatment is contraindicated for a particular client, err on the side of caution and contact the client's physician or postpone treatment. Because all therapists will need to look up a health condition, medication, or other information at some point during their professional career, have available key reference books including an up-to-date medical dictionary, drug reference, and pathology reference book.

Some clients need help getting on and off the treatment table. Provide a wide step stool and offer assistance to elderly clients, pregnant clients, and clients with physical challenges. Do not leave alone a client who is unstable and may fall. Instead, assist the client to the treatment room and help with undressing if appropriate. After the session, wipe the client's feet with a paper towel to remove excess lubricant from the foot massage, which could cause a client to slip while getting off the treatment table, especially in wet rooms with tiled floors.

### Alcohol, Drugs, and Prescription Medications

It is a serious breach of professional ethics for the therapist to work while under the influence of an illegal drug or alcohol. This would place clients at risk of emotional harm or physical injury. These substances also interfere with logical reasoning and decision making, which might lead to making a poor treatment choice for a client. Alcohol and drugs also influence the therapist's behavior and feelings and may result in inappropriate communication or emotional outbursts. Therapists who are suffering from a hangover should cancel any spa appointments or refer their clients to another therapist.

Sometimes, a therapist must take prescription medications for a condition or disorder. Each situation is unique, as is the therapist's response to the medication. Be aware



that medications may alter your perception, change your behavior, or affect your physical abilities. Talk with the prescribing physician about possible side effects in relation to your spa duties and responsibilities. Always act in the best interests of the client. If the medication interferes with your physical or mental ability to provide a safe and beneficial spa treatment, you may need to explore different medication options or take a break from your career until the situation improves.

Spa treatments may also be contraindicated for clients taking a prescription or over-the-counter medication that distorts their perceptions of hot, cold, pain, or pressure, or you may have to adapt the treatment to each client's needs. Do not provide a spa treatment to a client under the influence of an illegal drug or alcohol because it would place both of you in an unsafe situation. Spas that serve alcohol as part of a treatment should rethink this policy because it places them at liability risk in the event the client has a slip and fall accident at the spa facility or an accident while driving home from the spa.

### Accident Report

Any time that anyone at a business—including employees, the owner, clients, and visitors—is injured in an accident, causes injury to another, or causes property damage, an accident report should be written and filed. This report should provide detailed and accurate information about the accident, the people involved, injuries or property damage, and how the situation was resolved. This information must be accurate and detailed because it may be used by an insurance company to process a claim or may be evidence in a lawsuit. The accident report should include the following:

- The address and location in the premises where the accident occurred
- The date and time
- The name of the person filing the report and his or her job title
- The name, address, e-mail, and phone number of all individuals involved and those of any witnesses
- A detailed account of what happened
- Written witness accounts of what happened when appropriate
- A description of injuries or property damage
- How the matter was resolved (e.g., the individual was sent to the emergency room, the individual refused medical treatment and went home)

If more information later becomes available, it should be documented and kept in the same file as the accident report. For example, if a client was injured by falling off a wet table and a physician diagnosed an ankle sprain the next day, record this in the file. If the accident was caused by equipment failure (e.g., the wet table suddenly buckled due to a faulty brace), file a report with the manufacturer immediately. File a copy of this letter along with any response from the manufacturer. If the manufacturer telephones

to discuss the situation, document this conversation and keep it with the accident file. If a client is involved, a signed release is required before sending client information to an outside entity (e.g., insurance company, equipment manufacturer). This protects the client's privacy.

### Safety of the Therapist

While at work, you may be required to lift heavy objects such as laundry, bulk spa products, or housekeeping supplies. Always use good body mechanics to prevent back injury. You will also come into contact with strong cleaning products and should wear heavy gloves, a face mask, and protective eyewear to prevent contact with your eyes, respiratory system, or skin.

When you take good care of yourself, you are less likely to suffer an injury or illness while working as a spa therapist. Proper nutrition, adequate sleep, exercise, stress reduction activities, and good body mechanics all support your health and longevity in the profession.

### Client Screening

In some areas, illegitimate massage at illegitimate spas is still used as a cover for prostitution. Although most clients understand that professional massage is for wellness and good health, some people seek massage for sexual gratification. Regardless of whether your practice is based in your home or office or as a “call-out” service, careful client screening helps ensure your safety.

The screening process begins when the client calls to book an appointment or inquire about fees and services. Ask clients for their name, address, home phone number, work phone number, occupation, and how they heard about the spa business. Record all of this information in a client's new file. Ask what type of spa treatment or massage they are looking for (e.g., relaxation, sports, hot stone massage, an herbal body wrap). Ask if this is the first spa treatment or massage and/or if they have received spa treatments or massage regularly. With clients who have had spa treatments or massage before, ask them to describe the results they experienced and their current expectations for a spa treatment or massage. If the answers do not seem legitimate, be courteous but continue to question and educate the client. For example, you might say, “I would like to inform you about our spa policy.” This information can include the policies for a no-show client, the draping policy, and the policy on drugs and alcohol. A client who confuses massage with sexual favors may say something such as, “Do you provide erotic massage or spa treatments?” “What will you wear during the spa treatment?” “What do you look like?” “Can I massage myself during the session?” or “Will you help me if I get excited?” Remain courteous but end the conversation and refuse the appointment.

All therapists should be careful about booking new clients during times when they are alone in the office. Avoid this situation whenever possible. If you cannot avoid such

a situation, make arrangements with someone available to assist by telephone. Tell this person the time of the appointment and that you will call again after the intake interview. If anything feels strange during the intake interview, cancel the session and politely ask the client to leave. When the client leaves, call your backup person to say that you are safe. The backup person should be instructed to call you if you have not called by the time specified, and if you do not pick up the phone, they should call emergency services.

### Incident Report

An incident report is written whenever an unusual event occurs that creates an unsafe environment or distress for a client, therapist, or business owner. For example, a therapist might file an incident report if a client makes sexual advances during a spa session and the therapist had to end the session. The report should go directly to the business owner, who should then inform the client that he or she is no longer welcome at the spa. Another example is a client who is unhappy with the spa session and demands a refund. The therapist should document why the client was unhappy and actions taken to solve the problem. An incident report should include the following:

- The date, time, and place the incident occurred
- The name of the person filing the report and his or her title
- The name, address, e-mail, and phone number of all involved individuals and any witnesses
- A detailed account of what happened
- Written witness accounts of what happened when appropriate
- How the matter was resolved (e.g., the client was told that he or she is no longer welcome at the clinic, the client was given a refund and referral to another therapist)

## Cautions and Contraindications

A contraindication is any condition that makes the application of spa treatments unadvised or potentially dangerous to the health of the client. Table 3-3 provides an overview of conditions that may contraindicate spa treatments or require greater caution from the therapist. Following are the different types of contraindications and other considerations:

- **Absolute contraindication:** If the client has a condition that is an absolute contraindication, the client should not receive a spa treatment or a massage. Examples include a significant fever (100°F or higher), vomiting, a cold (unless the symptoms have been present for 5 days or longer; usually, people are contagious from 24 hours before they notice symptoms to 5 days after the first symptom), an acute systemic condition (when the condition affects the entire body and not just one local region),

an injury that requires medical attention, or symptoms that are intense and unexplained (e.g., intense headache pain). For example, a client with chickenpox or pink eye should not receive a spa treatment because the client is extremely contagious, and these conditions could be passed to the therapist or to other clients. Similarly, massage should not be provided to relieve headache pain in a client with a recent concussion. Not only would massage overstimulate this client, but the client also needs to see a physician to rule out serious complications. Note in Table 3-3 that many conditions are contraindicated in an acute stage, when the body is inflamed and the condition flares up, but are not contraindicated in a subacute or chronic stage. Usually, if massage is contraindicated, spa treatments will also be contraindicated; sometimes, the opposite is true. Sunburn is a good example. Massage is contraindicated, but a soothing aloe vera and German chamomile essential oil wrap are not.

- **Local contraindication:** A condition may affect only one area of the body. Spa treatments can be applied to the rest of the body, but the local area is avoided. If a client recently had a mole removed, you would not massage or apply seaweed over the area of reforming skin. If a client has a swollen knee, you would not apply warm mud to the area distal to the swelling and the swollen area, but the area proximal to the swelling and the rest of the body can be treated.
- **Advanced understanding:** Some therapists receive extra training and specialize in working with clients with specific conditions. Because of their experience, often through participation on a health care team, they develop an advanced understanding of the condition and know the limits of spa treatments and massage. These therapists can often work safely with a condition that would be contraindicated for a less experienced therapist. Novice therapists may avoid certain conditions early in their practices and then work with the same condition later as their knowledge increases with professional experience. Regardless of your level of experience, it is important to obtain a physician's release with complex conditions or clients who are taking multiple medications.
- **Physician's release:** Before providing spa treatments to clients with certain conditions, it is prudent to obtain a physician's release. The release indicates that the physician believes that the spa treatment will not harm the client and may prove beneficial to the client's health. Some physicians do not understand spa treatments, their physiological effects, or the increased burden they might place on a client's system. If possible, explain to the physician or the physician's staff the types of methods you plan to use in the client's session and the ways these methods might affect the client's body systems. This may help the physician make the best possible recommendations.
- **Use caution:** In many cases, spa treatments are not contraindicated, but the session must be adapted to fit the  
*(text continues on page 56)*

TABLE 3-3 Contraindications Chart

CONDITION <sup>a</sup>	CONTRAINDICATED	DR. RELEASE	EXFOLIATION	HYDROTHERAPY	SEAWEED	MUD	CLAY	PEAT	MASSAGE	STONE MASSAGE	PARAFANGO	HOT WRAPS	WARM WRAPS	COOL WRAPS	SHIRODHARA	UBVARTANA	FOOT TREATMENTS	REFER TO SKIN CARE SPECIALIST
Abortion, recent			UC	AU	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	C	UC	UC	▲	UC	▲	
Acne vulgaris			C	UC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	UC	UC	UC	SC	SC	▲	X
Acromegaly		X	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C <sup>b</sup>	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Addison's disease		X	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
AIDS (client condition good)		X	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Allergies: shellfish, iodine, seafood			▲	▲	C	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Alzheimer's disease		X	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	C	C	UC	UC	UC	
Amenorrhea			▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Angina pectoris		X	UC	C	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	C	C	UC	C	UC	UC	UC	
Anorexia nervosa appendicitis		X	UC	UC	C	▲	▲	▲	UC	C	UC	C	▲	C	▲	UC	▲	
Anxiety disorder		X	▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	C	C	C	UC	UC	▲	
Arteriosclerosis		X	UC	C <sup>b</sup>	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	C	▲	UC	UC	
Asthma			▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	C	▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	
Atherosclerosis		X	UC	C <sup>b</sup>	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	C	▲	UC	UC	
Athlete's foot			C	SC	▲	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	▲	▲	▲	▲	SC	SC	
Bed sore or pressure sore		X	SC	AU	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	C	UC	UC	▲	SC	SC	
Bipolar disorder		X	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	C	C	UC	UC	UC	
Boil			SC	UC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	UC	UC	UC	SC	SC	SC	X
Bronchitis			▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	
Bruise			SC	SC	▲	▲	▲	▲	SC	SC	SC	SC	▲	▲	▲	SC	SC	
Burns, recent		X	SC	C	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	
Cardiac arrest, history of		X	UC	C <sup>b</sup>	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	C	C	UC	C	UC	UC	UC	
Cellulitis		X	SC	C	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	C	SC	SC	▲	SC	SC	
Cerebral palsy	X <sup>b</sup>																	
Chickenpox	X																	
Cholecystitis	X <sup>b</sup>																	
Chronic fatigue syndrome			▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	UC	C	▲	UC	▲	UC	▲	
Cirrhosis of the liver	X																	
Colitis			UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	UC	▲	UC	▲	

<sup>a</sup>For a description of the conditions, please refer to a pathology textbook.  
<sup>b</sup>Except under medical supervision or with advanced training or specialized understanding.  
 ▲, indicated/safe; AU, advanced understanding required; C, contraindicated; SC, site contraindicated; UC, use caution.

(continued on page 52)



TABLE 3-3 Contraindications Chart (continued)

CONDITION <sup>a</sup>	CONTRAINDICATED	DR. RELEASE	EXFOLIATION	HYDROTHERAPY	SEAWEED	MUD	CLAY	PEAT	MASSAGE	STONE MASSAGE	PARAFANGO	HOT WRAPS	WARM WRAPS	COOL WRAPS	SHIRODHARA	UBVARTANA	FOOT TREATMENTS	REFER TO SKIN CARE SPECIALIST
Common cold (2 to 3 days after acute)			UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	▲	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Congestive heart failure	X <sup>b</sup>																	
Conjunctivitis (pinkeye)	X																	
Constipation			▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Contact dermatitis			SC	UC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	C	C	UC	SC	SC	SC	
Contusion or concussion, recent	X																	
Coronary artery disease		X	UC	C <sup>b</sup>	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	C	C	UC	C	▲	UC	UC	
Crohn's disease		X	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Cushing's disease		X	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	C	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	
Cystic fibrosis		X	UC	AU	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Cystitis (chronic; acute C)			▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	C	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Depression		X	▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	UC	UC	UC	UC	▲	▲	
Diabetes insipidus		X	UC	C <sup>b</sup>	C <sup>b</sup>	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	UC		UC	UC	
Diabetes mellitus		X	UC	C	C	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	C	C	UC	C	▲	UC	UC	
Diarrhea	X <sup>b</sup>																	
Diverticulitis		X	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Diverticulosis		X	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Dysmenorrhea			▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Eczema			SC	UC	UC	SC	UC	SC	UC	UC	UC	UC	▲	▲	UC	SC	UC	X
Embolism		X	UC	C <sup>b</sup>	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	C	C	UC	C	▲	UC	UC	
Emphysema			▲	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	C	▲	UC	▲	UC	▲	
Endocarditis	X																	
Endometriosis			▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Epilepsy		X	UC	UC	C <sup>b</sup>	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	C	C	UC	UC	UC	
Fever	X																	
Fibrocystic breast disease			▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Fibroids			▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Fibromyalgia			▲	AU	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	UC	▲	UC	▲	UC	▲	
Flaccid muscles			▲	AU	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	
Folliculitis			SC	UC	UC	SC	UC	SC	SC	SC	SC	UC	UC	UC	SC	SC	▲	X
Gastritis (chronic; acute C)			UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	

<sup>a</sup>For a description of the conditions, please refer to a pathology textbook.

<sup>b</sup>Except under medical supervision or with advanced training or specialized understanding.

▲, indicated/safe; AU, advanced understanding required; C, contraindicated; SC, site contraindicated; UC, use caution.

TABLE 3-3 Contraindications Chart (continued)

CONDITION <sup>a</sup>	CONTRAINDICATED	DR. RELEASE	EXFOLIATION	HYDROTHERAPY	SEAWEED	MUD	CLAY	PEAT	MASSAGE	STONE MASSAGE	PARAFANGO	HOT WRAPS	WARM WRAPS	COOL WRAPS	SHIRODHARA	UBVARTANA	FOOT TREATMENTS	REFER TO SKIN CARE SPECIALIST
Gastroenteritis	X																	
Gastroesophageal reflux disease			UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Goiter			UC	UC	C	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	UC	UC	
Gout			C	AU	AU	AU	AU	AU	SC	SC	SC	C	▲	▲	▲	SC	C	
Graves' disease	X	UC	UC	C	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Heart murmur	X	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Hemangioma			SC	UC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	UC	UC	UC	▲	SC	SC	
Hematoma			SC	C <sup>b</sup>	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	C	UC	UC	▲	SC	SC	
Hemophilia	X	C	C	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	C	C	UC	C	▲	UC	UC	
Hemorrhage	X																	
Hepatitis (chronic; acute C)	X	UC	C <sup>b</sup>	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Hernia	X	SC	UC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	C	SC	SC	▲	SC	▲	
Herniated disk	X	SC	AU	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	C	UC	UC	▲	SC	▲	
Herpes simplex			SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	UC	SC	▲	
Hypercholesterolemia	X	UC	C <sup>b</sup>	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	C	▲	UC	UC	
Hypertension	X	UC	C <sup>b</sup>	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	C	UC	C	▲	UC	UC	
Hyperthyroidism	X	UC	UC	C	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	C	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Hypotension	X	UC	C <sup>b</sup>	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	C	UC	C	C	UC	UC	
Hypothyroidism	X	UC	UC	C	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Ichthyosis vulgaris			UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	▲	C	▲	▲	UC	UC	UC	X
Impetigo	X																	
Inflammation, acute			C	AU	AU	AU	AU	AU	SC	SC	SC	C	C	AU	UC	C	SC	
Inflammation, chronic			▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Inflammation, sub-acute			C	AU	AU	AU	AU	AU	UC	SC	AU	C	UC	UC	UC	SC	UC	
Influenza	X																	
Insomnia			▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Intestinal obstruction	X																	
Irritable bowel syndrome			UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	▲	UC	▲	
Jaundice	X																	
Kidney stones (acute C)	X	▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	
Lice	X																	

<sup>a</sup>For a description of the conditions, please refer to a pathology textbook.  
<sup>b</sup>Except under medical supervision or with advanced training or specialized understanding.  
 ▲, indicated/safe; AU, advanced understanding required; C, contraindicated; SC, site contraindicated; UC, use caution.

(continued on page 54)

TABLE 3-3 Contraindications Chart (continued)

CONDITION <sup>a</sup>	CONTRAINDICATED	DR. RELEASE	EXFOLIATION	HYDROTHERAPY	SEAWEED	MUD	CLAY	PEAT	MASSAGE	STONE MASSAGE	PARAFANGO	HOT WRAPS	WARM WRAPS	COOL WRAPS	SHIRODHARA	UBVARTANA	FOOT TREATMENTS	REFER TO SKIN CARE SPECIALIST
Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS)	X <sup>b</sup>																	
Lupus (in remission)		X	UC	C	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	C	C	UC	C	▲	UC	UC	
Lyme disease			UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Lymphangitis	X																	
Lymphedema	X <sup>b</sup>																	
Meningitis	X																	
Menopause			▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	UC	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Mononucleosis	X <sup>b</sup>																	
Multiple sclerosis	X <sup>b</sup>																	
Muscular dystrophy		X	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Myocardial infarction (history of)		X	UC	C <sup>b</sup>	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	C	C	UC	C	UC	UC	UC	
Myocarditis	X																	
Neuropathy		X	SC	C	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	C	C	C	UC	UC	▲	SC	SC	
Obesity			▲	AU	UC	▲	▲	▲	UC	UC	UC	C	▲	UC	▲	UC	▲	
Osteoarthritis		X	UC	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	UC	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Ovarian cysts			▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Pancreatitis (chronic; acute C)		X	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	UC	▲	UC	▲	
Paralysis	X <sup>b</sup>																	
Parkinson's disease		X	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	C	C	UC	UC	UC	
Pelvic inflammatory disease	X																	
Pericarditis	X																	
Peripheral vascular disease, mild		X	SC	C	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	C	C	C	UC	C	▲	SC	SC	
Peritonitis	X <sup>b</sup>																	
Phlebitis		X	SC	C	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	C	C	C	UC	C	▲	SC	SC	
Pleurisy, nonbacterial		X	UC	C <sup>b</sup>	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Polycystic kidney disease		X	▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	C	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Preeclampsia	X																	
Pregnancy			UC	AU	C	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	C	C	C	UC	
Pregnancy, high risk		X	UC	C	C	C	C	C	UC	C	C	C	UC	C	C	C	UC	

<sup>a</sup>For a description of the conditions, please refer to a pathology textbook.

<sup>b</sup>Except under medical supervision or with advanced training or specialized understanding.

▲, indicated/safe; AU, advanced understanding required; C, contraindicated; SC, site contraindicated; UC, use caution.



TABLE 3-3 Contraindications Chart (continued)

CONDITION <sup>a</sup>	CONTRAINDICATED	DR. RELEASE	EXFOLIATION	HYDROTHERAPY	SEAWEED	MUD	CLAY	PEAT	MASSAGE	STONE MASSAGE	PARAFANGO	HOT WRAPS	WARM WRAPS	COOL WRAPS	SHIRODHARA	UBVARTANA	FOOT TREATMENTS	REFER TO SKIN CARE SPECIALIST
Premenstrual syndrome			▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Prostatitis			▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Pseudo sciatica		X	UC	UC	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	
Psoriasis			SC	AU	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	X
Pulmonary edema	X <sup>b</sup>																	
Pyelonephritis	X																	
Raynaud's syndrome			UC	C <sup>b</sup>	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	C	▲	UC	UC	
Rheumatoid arthritis		X	UC	AU	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	SC	C	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	
Ringworm	X																	
Scabies	X																	
Scars, old			UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Scars, recent		X	SC	AU	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	
Scleroderma		X	UC	AU	UC	▲	▲	▲	UC	UC	▲	C	UC	UC	UC	UC	▲	
Sebaceous cyst			UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	SC	SC	UC	UC	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	X
Sickle cell disease		X	UC	C	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	C	C	UC	C	▲	UC	UC	
Sinusitis (no fever present)			▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Site infection or fungus			SC	SC	UC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	▲	▲	▲	▲	SC	SC	
Skin tags			UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	X
Stroke		X	UC	C <sup>b</sup>	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	C	UC	C	UC	C	UC	UC	UC	
Substance abuse, recovery from		X	▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	UC	UC	▲	▲	▲	
Sunburn			C	AU	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	▲	SC	C	SC	
Thromboangiitis obliterans		X	SC	C	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	C	C	C	UC	C	▲	SC	SC	
Thrombophlebitis		X	SC	C	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	C	C	C	UC	C	▲	SC	SC	
Tonsillitis	X																	
Tuberculosis (no longer infective)		X	▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Ulcers			▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	UC	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Urethritis	X																	
Varicose veins			SC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	UC	SC	UC	UC	UC	UC	▲	UC	UC	

<sup>a</sup>For a description of the conditions, please refer to a pathology textbook.  
<sup>b</sup>Except under medical supervision or with advanced training or specialized understanding.  
 ▲, indicated/safe; AU, advanced understanding required; C, contraindicated; SC, site contraindicated; UC, use caution.

client's overall vitality and stamina. Obviously, a client who is young and in good physical condition can receive a more vigorous spa treatment than an elderly client who is thin and frail. Sometimes, the spa treatment is shortened or certain methods are avoided. Sometimes, the way in which the client is positioned on the table is changed to accommodate a particular condition. You may be able to work with the client as you normally would but with increased vigilance. Watch for any change in the client's condition or for side effects or adverse effects that may develop. A sudden increase in pain, moderate to intense discomfort, agitation, nausea, headache, or excessive dizziness is a sign that the client is not responding to spa treatments normally. If any of these symptoms occurs during a treatment, stop the session, offer the client water, and allow the client to relax. Monitor the client at all times and do not allow the client to leave until the symptoms have disappeared. If symptoms persist after the session has ended, you should consult a physician. If the symptoms increase rapidly after the session has ended, the client could be in danger, and you should call emergency services.

### Spa-Specific Considerations

The spa product chosen for a particular treatment, the surface area of the body that it is to cover, and the overall condition of the client all need careful consideration. A spot treatment may be safe when a full-body application is contraindicated. If the product, or some of its ingredients, can penetrate the skin and enter the circulation (e.g., essential oils), it must be used with more caution. In such a situation, a full-body application would allow substantially more of the product to penetrate than a spot application.

Seaweed applications can affect thyroid medications, so they should be avoided in cases of hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism (except when used under the direction of a physician). Peppermint, eucalyptus, and rosemary essential oils will counteract the effects of many homeopathic remedies, so they should not be applied to a client who is using such remedies to treat a condition. If the client is taking a prescription or over-the-counter medication that distorts his or her perception of hot, cold, pain, or pressure, postpone the treatment. For the same reason, clients under the influence of drugs or alcohol should not receive a treatment. Also, offering wine, champagne, or other alcoholic drinks as part of the treatment or spa package endangers the client and may affect the legal liability of the clinic or spa.

Clients who are pregnant, in a weakened condition, have neurological conditions, have heart conditions, or have uncontrolled high or low blood pressure should not receive hydrotherapy treatments except when under the care of a physician. Similarly, such clients need a doctor's release for full-body spa treatments including mud, herbal hot sheet wraps, and seaweed wraps.

### Common Conditions That Require Caution

Although the range of conditions you might see as a professional spa therapist is vast, hypertension, integumentary issues, diabetes, and allergic reactions to spa products are more common, so they require special attention.

#### Hypertension

Blood pressure refers to the force of blood pushing against blood vessel walls as it circulates throughout the body. A sphygmomanometer is an instrument that measures this pressure at two different moments. The systolic pressure is the peak pressure in the arteries, which occurs near the beginning of the cardiac cycle during ventricular contraction. The diastolic pressure is the lowest pressure of the resting phase of the cardiac cycle during ventricular relaxation. A blood pressure cuff measures the pressure in the arteries in millimeters of mercury, which is why the abbreviation mm Hg is used in blood pressure descriptions.

High blood pressure, called hypertension, is a blood pressure consistently elevated above 140 mm Hg systolic and 90 mm Hg diastolic. Usually in chart notes, physicians or nurses would write this blood pressure as 140/90 mm Hg. The top number refers to the systolic pressure and the bottom number the diastolic number.

Essential hypertension is hypertension that is not due to some other pathology. Secondary hypertension is high blood pressure that is a symptom of a separate pathology such as a hormonal disorder. Malignant hypertension is a dangerous condition in which the diastolic pressure increases rapidly over the course of weeks or months and requires immediate medical attention. Most hypertension cases are essential hypertension and are caused by smoking, being overweight, a sedentary lifestyle, a salty diet, high alcohol consumption, stress, age, and genetic factors as evidenced in a family history of hypertension. Pregnancy, kidney disease, and adrenal and thyroid gland disorders are some of the causes of secondary hypertension.

Hypertension is a serious condition that causes damage to the heart and blood vessels. Left untreated, it can lead to atherosclerosis, aneurysms, stroke, heart failure, heart attack, kidney failure, and vision problems. Blood pressure parameters are the following:

- Normal: less than 120/80 mm Hg
- Prehypertension: 120/80 to 139/89 mm Hg
- Stage 1 hypertension: 140/90 to 159/99 mm Hg
- Stage 2 hypertension: 160/100 mm Hg and above

Some clients with hypertension take prescription medications to control their blood pressure and reduce their risks of adverse effects related to the interplay of spa treatments and hypertension. Still, some spa treatments should not be delivered without first consulting the client's physician. For example, any deep abdominal massage is contraindicated for clients with elevated blood pressure or who are taking blood pressure medications, but gentle, superficial

abdominal massage for relaxation is usually fine. Also avoid very vigorous or very stimulating massage or spa techniques that trigger the sympathetic nervous system. This includes intense hydrotherapy treatments such as contrast showers or baths (discussed in Chapter 6, Water Therapies), cold treatments, or exposure to heat in a sauna or steam room. Saunas raise the temperature of the client's skin to above 103°F. This change in skin temperature stimulates sweating, the elimination of wastes through the skin, a faster heart rate, and lower blood pressure.

For healthy adults, the reduction of blood pressure is a temporary reaction to the body's rise in skin temperature. When a healthy person exits the sauna, blood pressure returns to normal. People with high blood pressure also experience this temporary lowering of blood pressure, but after leaving the sauna, their blood pressure can behave abnormally, sometimes rising dramatically.

### Integumentary Conditions

A basic understanding of the skin is vital to every therapist working in a spa to ensure client safety. Massage lubricants and body treatment products affect the skin, so they must be chosen with care. For example, although a product might be indicated for a client's muscular condition, it may be contraindicated for the client's skin condition. Massage therapists therefore need a good knowledge of skin types and skin problems so that they know when to direct the client to an esthetician or dermatologist for professional skin care.

The essential oils used in aromatherapy are often misused in skin care because the word *oil* is misleading. Essential oils do not directly address dry skin conditions by adding oil or moisture to the skin. In fact, most essential oils are quite drying for the skin and can cause irritation if used inappropriately on a particular skin type. Essential oils are useful as antiseptics and for helping the body to relax.

Stress plays a role in many skin disorders, so massage therapists and estheticians can work together for the benefit of the client. A full-body massage using spa products that are appropriate for the client's skin condition can significantly reduce stress and have a significant impact on skin health. Improvements in the condition of the skin take a while and require patience. At least a month is required before a significant improvement can be seen in most conditions. Often, skin conditions require many months to resolve. When estheticians and massage therapists recognize the potential synergy of the work that they do, they can provide integrative and supportive treatment plans for clients.

Table 3-4 provides an overview of skin types and conditions which the massage therapist should be aware of. Some essential oils appropriate for each condition are included in the table. This information will be useful for massage therapists making blends for a safe full-body massage and for estheticians using essential oils in skin care treatments. In addition, recommendations are given on products that should be avoided. Go to the chapters on aromatherapy,

body wraps, fangotherapy, and thalassotherapy for more detailed information.

### The Skin

The skin is the largest organ of the body and has many important functions (Fig. 3-5). Color and texture changes, such as paleness, redness, bumpiness, or yellowing, reflect the overall health of the body and may indicate internal disease. Rashes and skin eruptions illustrate poor nutritional habits, stress, allergies, and sensitivities.

The outer layer of the skin is called the epidermis. It contains no blood vessels but has many nerve endings. The epidermis has multiple sublayers called strata. The bottom layer of the epidermis is the stratum basale layer, which produces a constant supply of new cells. Keratinocytes make up 80% to 90% of the epidermis and produce keratin. As the Keratinocytes mature, they lose water and flatten out. They are shed when they reach the outermost layer of the epidermis called the stratum corneum.

The stratum corneum provides the barrier function of the skin, protecting the body from microbial invasion and injury. It also protects the body from water loss. In fact, this layer is 1,000 times more impermeable to water than most other membranes of living organisms.

A healthy stratum corneum is compact with an orderly arrangement of cells in what is often referred to as the "brick and mortar" of the skin. The bricks are dead cells filled with keratin. The mortar is the lipids between the cells that "cement" them together. When the corneum layer is damaged, the cells are thin and arranged in an uneven pattern. Damage allows preparations applied to the skin to penetrate more readily. This is why dry or scaly skin may give a burning sensation when products are applied to it.

On the stratum corneum, sebum, perspiration, and other water-soluble acids produce a pH of 4.4 to 5.6. This is the skin's acid mantle that acts as a defense mechanism against invading microbes (Fig. 3-6). Research indicates that the low pH in the stratum corneum also plays a role in corneocyte maturation (the maturation of the keratin-filled cells that make up the stratum corneum).

The inner layer of the skin, the dermis, is thicker than the epidermis and is composed of connective tissue that contains collagen and elastin. Collagen makes up a large part of the dermis (70%) and gives the skin structural support for cells and blood vessels. It forms a network of microscopic interwoven fibers that allows for stretching and contraction of the skin. It also aids in the healing of wounds. Moisture is important for keeping the collagen network supple.

The follicles, sweat glands, sebaceous glands, most of the sensory receptors, and nerve endings are all found in the reticular layer of the dermis. The sebaceous glands secrete sebum, an oily, waxy substance composed of various kinds of lipids that lubricate the skin. Normally, it flows through the oil ducts, leading to hair follicles. When sebum becomes hardened, the follicle becomes blocked. This is what causes blackheads (comedones). Excessive flow of oil from the oil



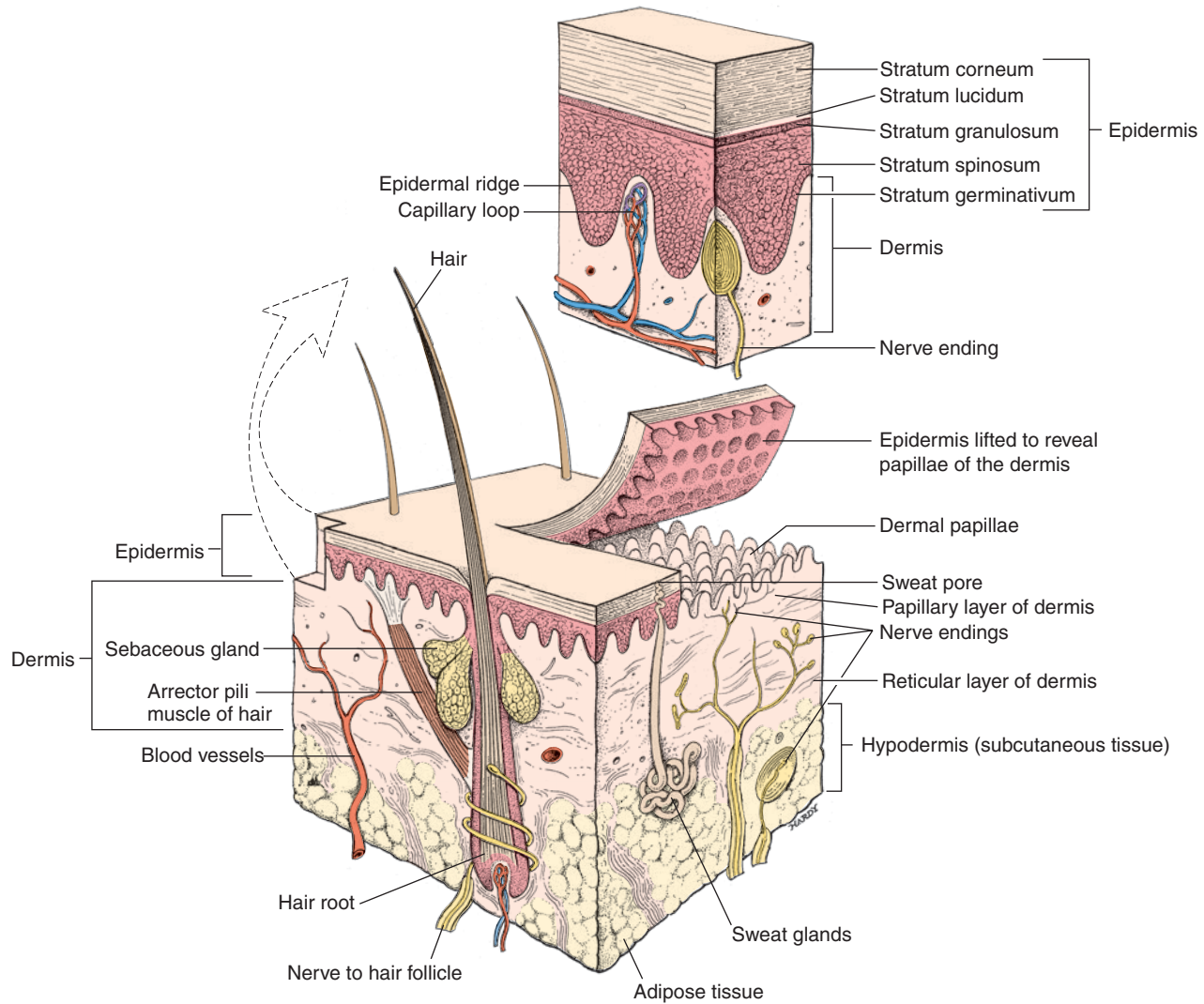
TABLE 3-4 Important Skin Types and Conditions

BASIC SKIN TYPE OR SKIN CONDITION	DESCRIPTION	GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS
Normal	The skin is clear, with an even tone and texture, and good color and is blemish free.	Full-body massage blends with essential oils of lavender, neroli, Roman or German chamomile, geranium, jasmine, frankincense, or rose. Citrus oils can also be used in moderation. Seaweed, clay, mud, and peat can be used at full strength.
Oily	Characterized by the overproduction of sebum. Enlarged pores (follicles) may be filled with visible grease and debris. Blemishes may be present on the face or back.	Full-body massage blends with essential oils of bergamot, tea tree, lemon, grapefruit, lavender, geranium, German chamomile, or cedarwood in a jojoba base. If inflammatory acne is present, products should be diluted or the client should be referred to an esthetician before the treatment progresses. Seaweed mixed with aloe vera and clay is appropriate. Mud and peat should be avoided.
Oil dry	Sebaceous output has slowed and the skin is not receiving enough natural oil. The skin appears dry and dehydrated.	Full-body massage blends with essential oils of lavender, German chamomile, geranium, rose, carrot seed oil, frankincense, myrrh, and Roman chamomile in shea butter or a heavy carrier oil such as sweet almond. Keep products covered and moist while on the skin and do not allow clay, peat, or seaweed to dry out. Refer the client to an esthetician for a professional skin care evaluation.
Water dry	Skin that is "water dry" has sufficient oil but lacks moisture. The skin is thin in texture, with small capillaries showing in certain areas. This type of skin is prone to fine lines, early wrinkles, and a flaky appearance.	Full-body massage blends with essential oils of carrot seed, seaweed essential oil, frankincense, myrrh, German chamomile, Roman chamomile, yarrow, <i>helichrysum</i> , rose, or geranium. Avoid citrus oils in high concentrations. Avoid the use of clay and direct the client to mud, peat, seaweed, shea butter, or honey applications instead. Refer the client to an esthetician for a professional skin care evaluation.
Sensitive	The texture of the skin tends to be fine with redness, heat, broken capillaries, and itching patches. Sensitive skin reacts to strong chemicals, cleaning products, dyes, and fragrances.	Full-body massage blends with essential oils of <i>helichrysum</i> , carrot seed, lavender, rose, frankincense, geranium in sweet almond oil, or expeller-pressed sunflower oil (12 drops maximum of essential oil in 2 oz of oil). Avoid products with dyes and synthetic fragrances. Avoid hot treatments such as sheet wraps or Parafango. Dilute seaweeds to half strength with aloe vera gel or wheat germ oil. It is a good idea to keep hydrocortisone cream on hand in case of skin irritation.
Acne on the back	Blackheads, whiteheads, pimples, redness, and irritation may be present. If the condition is inflamed and hot, do not apply product to the area.	If the condition is mild, then the massage therapist can proceed with massage or a body treatment. Full-body massage blends that benefit oily skin and acne include tea tree, lavender, German chamomile, Roman chamomile, yarrow, grapefruit, bergamot, and lemon mixed in jojoba or hemp oil. Avoid the use of peat, paraffin, Parafango, and mud and direct the client toward clay or seaweed instead.
Psoriasis	Skin cells divide much faster than normal, resulting in round, reddish patches with silvery scales. Psoriasis usually affects the elbows, knees, lower back, ears, and scalp.	A wide range of essential oils is indicated because psoriasis is considered by many to be a stress-related disorder. Nurturing oils that are unlikely to cause irritation include neroli, ylang ylang, rose, lavender, cypress, <i>helichrysum</i> , yarrow, and frankincense. A combination of these oils can be mixed in hemp seed oil, apricot kernel oil, or expeller-pressed sunflower oil. Although mild cases of psoriasis do not seem to be irritated by spa products, mud and peat should be avoided. Direct the client to clay, Parafango, paraffin, honey, shea butter, or diluted seaweed instead. Refer the client to a dermatologist.
Eczema and dermatitis	These terms are used to describe many chronic and inflammatory disorders of the skin. Scaling and papule formation as well as red oozing vesicles may accompany burning and itching sensations.	If the condition is mild, the massage therapist can proceed with full-body massage or the application of a product to the body. Essential oils of German chamomile, Roman chamomile, yarrow, frankincense, <i>helichrysum</i> , lavender, and myrrh can be used in shea butter, sweet almond oil, hemp oil, or borage oil. Seaweed may cause irritation, so it should be diluted. Mud and peat should be avoided, but clay or Parafango can be used. Avoid products with synthetic fragrances or dyes. Refer the client to a dermatologist.

glands may produce seborrhea and problem skin. Emotional stress increases the flow of sebum.

The skin was thought to be impervious to most chemicals until, in the 1960s, dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) was shown to transport other substances through the skin barrier and into the bloodstream. It is important to understand that some of the ingredients of spa products do pass through the

skin into the bloodstream where they may affect the body on a physiological level. There are many factors that contribute to the passage of these ingredients through the skin. Lipophilic (literally "lipid-loving" or "fat-loving") ingredients penetrate better than hydrophilic ("water-loving") ingredients. Essential oils pass rapidly through the skin due to their lipophilic nature. The polysaccharides (mucilaginous,

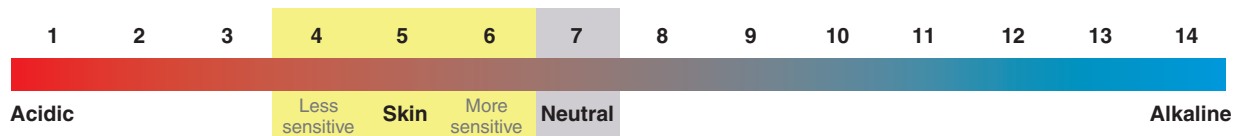


**FIGURE 3-5** The skin is the largest organ of the body and has many important functions. Color and texture changes, such as paleness, redness, bumpiness, or yellowing, reflect the overall health of the body and may indicate internal disease. Rashes and skin eruptions illustrate poor nutritional habits, stress, allergies, and sensitivities.

slimy substances) in seaweed also pass readily through the skin. It is not surprising that small-sized molecules penetrate faster than larger molecules or that a viscous formulation will pass through more slowly than more fluid preparations. Dead cells and lipid accumulation in the stratum corneum as well as sebum pH and skin thickness affect the rate at which a substance passes through the skin.<sup>6</sup> Some natural components increase skin penetration. These include linoleic acid (found in evening primrose oil and some

other seed oils),<sup>7</sup> oleic acid (found in almond, cod liver oil, and others),<sup>8</sup> menthol (found in some essential oils such as peppermint),<sup>9,10</sup> and squalene (found in olives, wheat germ oil, and shark liver oil).<sup>11</sup>

Any areas of broken skin such as open wounds, scratches, blemishes, or scabs are local contraindications. Contagious skin conditions such as cellulitis, impetigo, mites (scabies), and lice are absolute contraindications, and spa treatments or massage should not be provided. Hives is a reaction to



**FIGURE 3-6** pH Graph. On the stratum corneum, sebum, perspiration, and other water-soluble acids produce a pH of 4.4 to 5.6. This is the skin's acid mantle that acts as a defense mechanism against invading microbes.

stress or an allergy that makes the skin hot, swollen, and itchy. It is a local contraindication if it is confined to one small region but an absolute contraindication if widespread.

With a skin condition that is contagious but confined to one small area such as boils, fungal infections including ringworm, herpes simplex, and warts, the area is locally contraindicated, but spa treatments or massage can be applied to other areas of the body. Separate used linens that were exposed to contagious skin conditions, especially herpes, and use bleach and hot water in the wash cycle. Sanitize your hands, wear vinyl gloves, and clean all massage equipment and the treatment room with extra care after the session.

Avoid massaging directly over areas of acne (a bacterial infection of the sebaceous glands), using heavy creams in these areas, or applying natural products such as mud that may contain bacteria that could enter the body through broken skin. Any of these activities might spread the infection to other areas of the client's skin or cause increased blemishing by blocking pores.

Dermatitis is a nonspecific term describing many types of skin inflammation. Often, dermatitis is caused by contact with an irritating substance or allergen. Eczema is caused by hypersensitivity reactions of the skin. Psoriasis is a noncontagious skin disorder in which epithelial skin cells replicate rapidly in patches and turn itchy and scaly. If the skin of a client with any of these conditions is very inflamed, is open due to scratching, or is weepy or crusty with delicate scabs, treat the areas as a local contraindication and avoid the application of spa products.

If the skin is in relatively good condition, not overly inflamed, intact, and not crusty, it may respond well to massage with a natural anti-inflammatory lubricant such as hemp seed oil and skin-soothing essential oils such as German chamomile and *helichrysum* oil (see Chapter 7 on aromatherapy). Do not use mud, seaweed, or products with synthetic fragrances, dyes, mineral oil, lanolin, coconut oil, grapeseed oil, or cocoa butter on clients with dermatitis, eczema, or psoriasis.

Precancerous skin conditions such as actinic lesions and skin cancers such as basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma are local contraindications. Malignant melanoma spreads rapidly and is treated aggressively, often with chemotherapy and radiation. Any spa treatments for clients with malignant melanoma should take place only under the guidance of the client's physician.

Skin injuries such as burns (including moderate to severe sunburn), ulcers, or open wounds are local contraindications. Widespread burns and ulcerations may be an absolute contraindication, depending on their severity. The scar tissue that forms over burns, ulcers, or wounds responds well to massage, seaweed treatments, and mud treatments in the subacute and chronic stages. These natural products and massage can improve the appearance and mobility of this type of scar tissue. Keloid scar tissue and raised moles are local contraindications.

## Allergies

It is possible for clients to have allergies to spa products, so therapists must understand something about allergies and how they occur. A primary function of the immune system is to differentiate “self” from “nonself” substances. The immune system destroys or subdues anything identified as nonself as fast as possible. Allergies are an immune system response and are not caused by an infectious agent. Even substances that pose no threat to the body such as pollen, pet dander, a component in a lubricant, or other allergens (substances that causes an allergic reaction) are perceived by the immune system as a threat. Common allergies such as hay fever induce mast cells (cells that play a role in wound healing and protection against pathogens) to release histamine and other chemicals that change vascular permeability. This inflammatory response leads to symptoms such as watery eyes, itching skin, swelling, a runny nose, or vomiting and diarrhea (with food allergies). In severe allergic reactions, known as anaphylaxis, mast cells release large amounts of histamine that lead to edema and sudden low blood pressure. Symptoms can include hives, redness, shortness of breath, coughing, sneezing, decreased heart rate, fainting, and shock. The rapid onset of localized swelling is called angioedema. Swelling that occurs in the tongue, larynx, or pharynx might block airflow, creating a life-threatening condition. Peanuts (and other nuts), fish and shellfish, latex, bee stings, and some foods such as milk and eggs can cause severe reactions of this sort. Clients with known allergies to nuts should not receive massage with a lubricant containing ingredients from that nut (e.g., peanut oil, almond oil). Clients with a known allergy to shellfish or seafood should not receive seaweed treatments or contact products with seaweed in them. People who know they are at risk for anaphylactic reactions usually keep medication with them, such as Benadryl or injectable epinephrine (EpiPen).

## Diabetes

Diabetes is a group of related conditions that result in elevated levels of blood sugar (hyperglycemia). About 98% of all diabetes cases are either type 1 (rare and more serious) or type 2 diabetes (approximately 20.8 million cases in the United States). Gestational diabetes affects about 4% of all pregnant women and accounts for around 135,000 cases each year.<sup>12</sup>

In type 1 diabetes, the body does not produce insulin, the hormone needed to convert sugar (glucose) into energy. It may have genetic roots, as it runs in families, or be caused by exposure to certain drugs, chemicals, or infections. It is caused by an autoimmune response in which killer T cells damage parts of the beta cells in the pancreas where insulin is created, causing a lifelong deficiency. People with type 1 diabetes must take injections of insulin and monitor their blood sugar levels carefully to avoid very high levels, which can cause ketoacidosis, or very low



blood sugar, which can cause insulin shock. Ketoacidosis is a condition in which the body metabolizes fats for fuel because the lack of insulin does not allow glucose to be used for energy in cells. The acidic waste of rapid fat metabolism changes the pH balance of the blood and can lead to shock, coma, and death.

In type 2 diabetes, the body does not produce enough insulin, or target cells have fewer receptor sites for insulin than needed. Although the exact cause of type 2 diabetes is unknown, it is linked to high-carbohydrate diets and is often treated with diet, exercise, and medications. Some people with type 2 diabetes have to supplement this regime with self-administered insulin. Although people with type 2 diabetes do not experience ketoacidosis, they may develop a blood pH imbalance related to high blood sugar, called hyperosmolality, that can lead to shock, coma, and death.

Insulin shock, very low blood sugar, can occur in both type 1 and 2 diabetes but can be treated effectively simply by ingesting juice, milk, candy, or sugar-containing soft drinks right away to increase blood sugar levels. Over time, diabetes can lead to serious complications, including cardiovascular disease, stroke, hypertension, aneurysm, edema, ulcers, gangrene, amputations, kidney disease, impaired vision, blindness, and neuropathy.

The types of spa techniques that can be used with clients who have diabetes depend on the state of the individual's health. Clients with poorly treated diabetes may have serious edema, ulcerations on their extremities, impaired circulation, and/or severe neuropathy. Very light massage or energetic techniques might be the only treatments that are appropriate for such clients. Hydrotherapy treatments using extremes of hot and cold temperatures, hot stone massage, or the application of aggressive treatment products such as seaweed are contraindicated. On the other hand, a client who monitors blood sugar carefully, eats a healthy diet, gets exercise, and experiences few complications may benefit from a variety of spa treatments.

Keep in mind the fact that spa treatments often stimulate the body, which uses up available glucose and insulin faster, which can lead to an imbalance, usually low blood sugar.<sup>13</sup> It's important to talk this over with the client who may need to plan mealtimes and insulin injections to better accommodate the spa session. Clients can also monitor their blood sugar immediately before the spa treatment and make necessary adjustments by eating a small snack or injecting insulin if needed. Keep some form of sugar in your office (juice, candy, regular soft drinks) in case a client becomes hypoglycemic. If a diabetic client becomes confused, irritable, weak, or shaky or has clammy skin, stop the session and give the client some sugar. If the client does not respond quickly to the sugar, call emergency services immediately. It is not in the massage therapy scope of practice to test a client's blood glucose level or inject insulin.

Spa therapists should obtain a physician's release when working with a client with advanced or poorly treated

diabetes. If possible, discuss with the physician the types of methods you would like to use in the session and their effects on the body to obtain the best possible recommendations to ensure the client's safety.

### Critical Thinking and Contraindications

Therapists discover contraindications or situations that require caution from the client's completed health intake form and the intake interview, from observations of the client, and from palpation findings or reactions the client has to the spa treatment.

Often, the client has a condition diagnosed by a physician and understands how that condition affects the body. As long as the condition is not completely contraindicated, the client and therapist can discuss session goals and plan adaptive measures to ensure comfort during the session. In some cases, a client's condition may be serious or complex enough to cause concern, in which case the therapist should contact the client's physician and obtain a release. Clients who do not have a diagnosed condition but who complain of symptoms such as fatigue, muscle weakness, unexplained pain or stiffness, persistent headache, or feelings of lethargy should see their physician and obtain a release before receiving a spa treatment. Undiagnosed symptoms may indicate a serious condition that might be exacerbated by spa treatments. Following is the basic process by which therapists rule out contraindications:

1. Administer a health intake form and review the form carefully.
2. Conduct a health intake interview and ask the client to describe symptoms, general health, goals for the spa session, and side effects from medications. Ensure that the client has listed all medications and conditions on the health intake form.
3. Look up unfamiliar diagnosed conditions in a pathology reference. *A Massage Therapists Guide to Pathology* by Ruth Werner is highly recommended.
4. Determine if the client's condition has flared up (moved suddenly from a chronic stage to an acute stage with intense symptoms). A condition that has flared up is more likely to be contraindicated. If the symptom level is normal for the client and the condition has not flared up, spa treatment is more likely to be safe for the client.
5. Look up medications in a drug reference. Note the side effects of the medication and check these against the client's experience. If the client describes symptoms that are listed as adverse effects of a medication, the situation needs further discussion. A call to the client's physician is advised.
6. Conditions vary from client to client, depending on other variables in the client's life. After researching the condition and medication and questioning the client about any side effects experienced from medications, assess the client visually. Get an overall impression of

the client's physical health, level of vitality, and stamina. Don't underestimate your intuition. Even if the reference books say massage or spa treatment is okay, but if your gut tells you "no," listen to your gut.

7. Determine if the client is contraindicated, needs a physician's release, has any area that should not receive treatment, should be referred to a more experienced therapist, or should be referred to another health care provider. If you decide that a spa treatment is not contraindicated and that you do not need a physician's release but adaptive measures are required, discuss your thoughts with the client. What does the client hope to achieve from the session? What type of spa treatment does the client want? How does the client feel right now? How does the client hope to feel at the conclusion of the spa session? Depending on the client's condition, you may eliminate the use of some techniques or adjust the temperature of some aspects of the treatment to reduce the load on the client's body. You may decide to avoid the use of hydrotherapy (e.g., a hot pack) and shorten the session's length (e.g., offer a 30-minute session instead of 60 or 90 minutes).
8. A client may list a few symptoms but not have a diagnosed condition or be taking medications. Question the client carefully. Perhaps a client tells you about weekly headaches believed to be from neck and shoulder tension. The client may have periods of nausea and refer to them as "nervous stomach." The nausea may occur when the client must give a presentation at work. The client also reports being unable to sleep for the last week and feeling moody and irritable. The client believes these symptoms are related to work stress and not related to any serious condition. You palpate the shoulders through the client's clothing and confirm the neck and shoulders are very tense, and the headaches could be the result of this tension. You have to decide if it is safe to provide a spa treatment or massage. Probably it is. Although these symptoms could be related to a more serious condition, the client has given you a logical explanation, and your shoulder and neck palpation supports the client's perception about the headaches. Your visual assessment tells you the client is in moderate physical health and has good skin coloring, and your impression of the client's overall vitality and stamina is good. You decide to proceed with the session but remain vigilant and check in regularly to determine that the client has not had an increase of symptoms or pain related to the session.

A different client might tell you about waking up with pain in all the joints, with a pounding headache, and feeling incredible fatigue. The client can give no explanation for these symptoms. Because these symptoms came on very suddenly with no logical explanation, you refer such clients to their physician for a release and postpone the session. Remember, when in doubt, refer out.

As mentioned previously, Table 3-3 provides an overview of conditions for quick reference, but do not rely completely on such a list. Each client and each situation is different, and therapists need to learn to reason clinically so that they can make appropriate decisions for each client. Novice therapists may shy away from conditions that an experienced therapist can work with safely. If you have any doubt about the suitability of a spa treatment for a client, be cautious and postpone the treatment until you have obtained a physician's release or can discuss the situation with your supervisor. Contraindications for specific spa treatments are described in greater detail in upcoming chapters.

## Documentation of Sessions in a Spa

The client intake process is just as important for a spa treatment as it is for massage, and before being treated, all clients need an evaluation of their physical condition. Refer to your massage therapy textbook to provide details of the health intake process in the event you need a reminder. To set a relaxing tone, you might provide a cup of herbal tea and soak the client's feet in a decorative tub while he or she fills out the health intake form (Fig. 3-7). The type of information included on the health form will depend on the scope of the spa, the services offered at the spa, or the needs of the therapist for that particular session. A nutritionist may ask some questions about the client's diet, whereas an esthetician will focus on the condition of the skin and a massage therapist will ask about muscular conditions. Spas can plan to have one intake form or several different forms that suit individual therapists or services.

When the client has completed the form, introduce yourself, describe the benefits of the treatment the client is about to receive, and review the form verbally with the client. Ask the client follow-up questions about health conditions and medications to rule out contraindications. Also ask clients about their expectations of the session so that you can tailor methods and experiences to their particular needs.

After the session, take a few moments to process the results with the client. Ask the client about methods he or she found particularly enjoyable or effective. This is a good time to recommend other beneficial services or home care products for the client. Document what occurred during the session, the client's results, and next steps if appropriate on a form such as the spa treatment record (Fig. 3-8). In the event of a liability claim, you will need this basic information to protect yourself and your business.

All therapists should plan some time at the beginning and end of every treatment, even for retuning clients, to discuss the client's current condition, determine the results obtained from treatment, and document what happened during the session.

## SPA HEALTH INFORMATION

Patient's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Health Care Provider**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Health Information**

Please list all conditions currently monitored by a health care provider.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please list all the medications you took today (include pain relievers and herbal remedies).

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please list the medications you took in the past 3 months.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please list and briefly explain (including dates and the treatment received) the following:

Surgeries \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Accidents \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Major Illnesses \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Tobacco Use:  Current  Past  Never Comments \_\_\_\_\_

Alcohol Use:  Current  Past  Never Comments \_\_\_\_\_

Drug use:  Current  Past  Never Comments \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently menstruating?  Yes  No

Have you received a spa treatment before?  Yes  No

If yes, what types of spa treatment have you received? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**FIGURE 3-7** Spa health form. The type of information included on the health form will depend on the scope of the spa, the services offered at the spa, or the needs of the therapist for that particular session. A nutritionist may ask some questions about the client's diet, whereas an esthetician will focus on the condition of the skin and a massage therapist will ask about muscular conditions. Spas can plan to have one intake form or several different forms that suit individual therapists or services. *(continued)*



### Current and Previous Conditions

Please check all current and previous conditions and give a brief explanation, if appropriate, in the comments section at the end of this form.

Current	Past	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Headache
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pain
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sleep disorders
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fatigue
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Infections
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fever
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sinus condition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Skin conditions
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Athlete's foot
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Warts
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Skin sensitivities
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sunburn
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Burns
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bruises
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Aversions to scent
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Aversion to oils
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Allergies
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sensitivity to detergents
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Aversion to cold
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Claustrophobia
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rheumatoid arthritis
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Osteoarthritis
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spinal problems
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disc problems
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lupus
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tendonitis, bursitis
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fibromyalgia
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dizziness, ringing in the ears
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mental confusion
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Numbness, tingling
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neuritis
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neuralgia
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sciatica, shooting pain
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Depression
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Anxiety, panic attacks
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Heart disease
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Blood clots
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stroke

Current	Past	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lymphedema
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	High blood pressure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Low blood pressure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Poor circulation
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Swollen ankles
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Varicose veins
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asthma
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bowel dysfunction
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bladder dysfunction
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Abdominal pain
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thyroid dysfunction
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diabetes
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pregnancy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fibrotic cysts
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pacemaker
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Phlebitis
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Raynaud's syndrome

**Other Conditions:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Comments:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Therapist's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

FIGURE 3-7 (continued)

## SPA TREATMENT RECORD

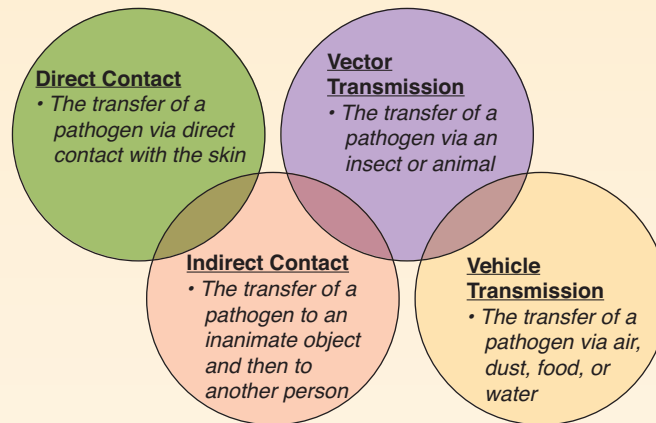
Patient's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date: Treatment received:	Therapist:	Comments:	Retail items purchased:
Date: Treatment received:	Therapist:	Comments:	Retail items purchased:
Date: Treatment received:	Therapist:	Comments:	Retail items purchased:
Date: Treatment received:	Therapist:	Comments:	Retail items purchased:
Date: Treatment received:	Therapist:	Comments:	Retail items purchased:
Date: Treatment received:	Therapist:	Comments:	Retail items purchased:

**FIGURE 3-8** Spa treatment record. Document what occurred during the session, the client's results, and next steps if appropriate on a form such as the spa treatment record.

## SPA FUSION

### INTEGRATION OF SKILLS



Example of a graphic organizer.

#### STUDY TIP: Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers are visual representations of concepts, ideas, and other information. They can help you organize and clarify information to improve your comprehension and recall. They are especially useful for visual and kinesthetic learners. Visual learners benefit from the structure of graphic organizers, whereas the process of creating a graphic organizer motivates kinesthetic learners.

#### SPA INSPIRATION: Your Spa Journal

Journaling can be a powerful practice during your spa training program. It allows you to keep track of the changes you are making on a mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual level. You will face challenges during your schooling—everyone does—and when you capture these in a journal you begin to see the pattern of your strength. This is exciting! Ask yourself simple questions to begin the process of journaling such as, “What did I learn in my class today that was particularly interesting? How will this change the way I approach my spa work?” or “What are some of my challenges right now? How can I better organize my life to get the most out of my training program?”

#### CHAPTER WRAP-UP

As a professional spa therapist, you want to practice exceptional ethics at all times to maintain your personal integrity and the integrity of the massage and spa professions. This means learning and following a code of ethics as established by the organizations you

join as a professional. Requiring a health intake form and checking it carefully to ensure spa treatments are not contraindicated for your client is just as important to your integrity and professionalism. Make sure to keep the proper reference books on hand and to research any unknown medications or client conditions before providing spa services. Document your sessions to ensure you have good records to follow on treatments and to protect yourself in the event of a liability claim. You are also required by health standards to provide a clean, hygienic, and safe environment for your clients. Good sanitation skills require practice. It's easy to forget small things in the course of a busy day, but such forgetfulness may cause a client to get sick. For example, a new therapist might forget to sanitize her hands before moving from foot massage to another area of the body. This client is now potentially exposed to a fungus that can take hold and grow on another area of the skin. A new therapist might forget to disinfect the oil bottle between clients. The second client is then exposed to pathogens from the first because the therapist touches the skin, touches the bottle, and then touches the new client's skin. Good sanitation practices also require you to pay attention to your every gesture. Did you touch your hair or scratch your nose as you transitioned from one body area to another? If you did, you should decontaminate your hands before you touch the client again. Be vigilant and practice thinking about sanitation as part of your spa treatment application. If you accidentally skip a sanitation step, stop and practice incorporating the step. In this way, you will be ready when you are a professional to provide your clients with the best possible care.

## SPA FUSION

### INTEGRATION OF SKILLS (continued)



#### REVIEW QUESTIONS

##### Multiple Choice

1. A creed that states a professional group's principles and the values by which the group abides is called:
  - a. A code of values
  - b. A code of principles
  - c. A code of professionalism
  - d. A code of ethics
2. The transfer of a pathogen from an infected person to an uninfected person through touch is called:
  - a. Direct contact
  - b. Indirect contact
  - c. Vector transmission
  - d. Vehicle transmission
3. A type of cleaning product that should not be used on the skin is:
  - a. An antiseptic
  - b. Alcohol
  - c. A disinfectant
  - d. Hydrogen peroxide
4. The authority a massage therapist is granted by a client because the massage therapist is a health care provider is called:
  - a. The health care authority
  - b. The power differential
  - c. The authority difference
  - d. The health care differential
5. A term used by regulating boards of health care professions to describe the techniques, activities, and methods that are permitted to a therapist under the law.
  - a. Health care authority
  - b. Power differential
  - c. Code of ethics
  - d. Scope of practice
6. A protocol used in health care settings that reduces the risk that health care workers will be exposed to bloodborne diseases is called:
  - a. Universal precautions
  - b. General precautions
  - c. Code of precautions
  - d. Health workers precautions code
7. Showing artistic pictures of undraped bodies in the massage or spa reception area is a form of:
  - a. Sexual assault
  - b. Sexual impropriety
  - c. Ethical conduct
  - d. Professional conduct
8. When regulations state that massage therapists cannot diagnose a patient's condition, prescribe a medication or treatment, or adjust a client's bones they are referring to:
  - a. Code of ethics restrictions
  - b. Sanitation and hygiene restrictions
  - c. Sexual impropriety restrictions
  - d. Scope of practice restrictions
9. Offering wine, champagne, or other alcoholic drinks as part of a spa treatment:
  - a. Is fine if the client is of legal drinking age
  - b. Is fine so long as the client does not consume more than two drinks
  - c. May lead to criminal charges against the therapist
  - d. Endangers the client and may lead to liability claims
10. A skin condition that is contagious but confined to one small area such as boils, fungal infections including ringworm, herpes simplex, and warts is:
  - a. A local contraindication
  - b. An absolute contraindication
  - c. Not a concern
  - d. Can receive treatment so long as the therapist wears gloves



# 4

## Your Spa Massage

### Chapter Outline

#### Overview of a Wellness Massage Session

Before the Massage

The Massage

After the Massage

#### Opening and Closing the Massage

Resting and Holding Strokes

Breathwork

Aromatherapy Inhalations

Use of an Auditory Cue

#### Massage Enhancers

Warm Packs

Steamy Aromatic Towels

A Simple Hand or Foot Treatment

Paraffin Dip

Easy Aromatherapy Enhancements

#### Putting Your Spa Massage Together

Sequencing

Routines

Subtle Factors That Influence the Massage



SPA FUSION

INTEGRATION OF SKILLS

**STUDY TIP:** Party! That's Right. Party!

**SPA INSPIRATION:** Spa Massage Olympics

**IT'S TRUE!** Diaphragmatic Breathing Exercises

Support Different Client Groups

**CHAPTER WRAP-UP**

### Key Terms

**Aroma mist:** A combination of distilled water and essential oils placed in a misting bottle. It is misted over the client at the end of a session to fill the treatment room with a refreshing scent.

**Aromatherapy inhalation:** One drop of an essential oil or 1 drop of a blend of different oils is briefly rubbed together in the hands before the hands are passed over the client's nose in an arc so that the oil can be enjoyed on a deep inward breath.

**Auditory cue:** A cue, such as the ringing of a chime, used to signal the beginning and ending of the massage session.

**Diaphragmatic breathing:** A breathing exercise that promotes deep, relaxed breathing patterns.

**Massage enhancers:** Additional session elements or small complementary treatments that increase the client's enjoyment of the session.

**Paraffin:** Paraffin is a waxy substance obtained from the distillates of wood, coal, petroleum, or shale oil. It is used to coat the skin and trap heat and moisture at the skin's surface.

**Pursed-lip breathing:** A breathing technique that promotes deep, relaxed breathing patterns.

**Routines:** Routines are a series of strokes that are planned in advance, delivered to body areas in a preset order, and practiced until they flow smoothly together.

**Sequencing:** Sequencing refers both to the sequence of strokes (the order in which strokes are applied to a given body area) and to the overall sequence of the massage (the order in which body areas are massaged).

**M**assage in a spa setting is just like massage in any other setting; it is usually customized to fit the needs of the individual client and can take many forms. All types of massage, including Swedish, lomilomi, Thai, sports, craniosacral, orthopedic, Shiatsu, myofascial work, ayurvedic marma point therapy, stone massage, neuromuscular therapy, and many others, are offered in spas around the country. Sometimes, the whole massage routine will be based on one style (e.g., lomilomi), and sometimes, a combination of techniques from many styles (e.g., Thai, marma point massage) will be integrated with Swedish massage strokes. The spa may train everyone to deliver the same massage, or they may allow each therapist to do his or her own massage routine. The goal is to develop your massage skills so that you can fluidly adapt to the style of massage requested by employers or meet the needs of your clientele in a private massage or spa business. This chapter provides an overview of a wellness massage session before looking closely at the subtle factors that can influence a client's enjoyment of a session. Finally, we put everything together into a beautiful, flowing, and luxurious session.

## Overview of a Wellness Massage Session

Massage theory and techniques are sometimes taught in isolation, especially in the early portions of a massage training program. Students focus on one skill at a time and then put them all together into an organized whole. Alternately, you may have completed your massage training program so that you can focus on specialization in spa therapies. In either case, it is helpful to preview the big picture to better understand where and how different skills are used during a wellness massage session—the type of massage session often offered at spas.

Let's review the difference between wellness massage and health care massage. The public seeks wellness massage to decrease stress, promote relaxation, support the body's natural restorative mechanisms, and have an enjoyable experience that leaves the body feeling refreshed and revitalized. Wellness massage is also used to reduce temporary pain from overexertion caused by activities such as weekend athletics or by unusual work stress. This type of massage is

generally viewed as a healthy activity to promote a balanced, functional life and is regularly promoted at spas, wellness centers, private practices, and massage clinics. We are about to examine the sequence of events that occur in a wellness massage. Note that the sequence of events in a health care massage (also called treatment or rehabilitative massage) is likely to be different. Usually, a health care massage requires more in-depth assessment of the client such as a posture and range of motion assessment and more detailed treatment planning.

### Before the Massage

When a client arrives for his or her first massage appointment at the spa, make every effort to make the person feel welcome. Orient the client to the new environment and recognize that a new client is making numerous boundary adjustments to participate in the massage session and is likely to feel some nervousness or discomfort as a result.

### The Greeting

As the client walks through the door, you or the receptionist should be on hand with a warm greeting. Step out from behind the reception desk to shake the client's hand and smile while making eye contact. Hand the client a clipboard with the required paperwork (usually, a health history form and documents relating to informed consent) and explain each document. Show the client to a seat in the reception area and perhaps offer a cup of herbal tea. The client fills out the paperwork and hands it in to you. In many spas, this process might take place in a quiet room, apart from the reception area, and be accompanied by a relaxing foot soak.

### The Tour

With paperwork in hand, you escort the client into the treatment area. Point out where the bathroom is located and any amenities such as the steam room or sauna the client might use on his or her next visit. Let the client know if a shower is available before or after the massage. Show the client into the treatment room and explain where to undress and hang clothing. It's a good idea to remind clients to remove jewelry before the session because lubricants can cause jewelry to look tarnished and delicate pieces may be damaged during massage strokes. Use a small dish to hold personal items so that jewelry is not lost or forgotten.

### The Interview

The client interview does not need to be a complex process, but each of the items we preview here should be discussed to ensure the safety of both client and therapist. The overview here is to describe where and how an interview occurs in the progression of a wellness massage, so in-depth details

are not included. Refer to your massage program training materials or instructor for more information about any processes you feel uncertain about. Offer the client a seat and sit down facing the client. The initial intake interview should accomplish a number of tasks but take no longer than 10 minutes:

1. **Policies and procedures:** Briefly review the spa's policies and procedures and information relating to informed consent, including the scope of practice for massage and the limitations of massage. Ensure
2. **Rule out contraindications:** Review the client's completed health history form. In some cases, you may need more information from the client about a particular condition to rule out contraindications. When you feel you understand the client's medical picture and that massage is not contraindicated, treatment planning begins. A sample of a health history form and a discussion of contraindications is provided in Chapter 3.

#### Massage Defined

Massage can be defined as structured, professional touch. Massage techniques manually manipulate the muscles, tendons and fascia of the body to promote health and wellness. Benefits of massage include stress reduction, circulation enhancement, relief from muscular tension, soreness and pain, and increased relaxation. People may find that meditation, other bodywork systems like myofascial release, energetic bodywork and Eastern massage like Amna provide results similar to relaxation massage.

#### Limitations of Massage

Massage therapists do not diagnose medical diseases or musculoskeletal conditions and massage is not a substitute for medical examination and treatment. Massage therapists do not prescribe herbs or drugs including aspirin or ibuprofen, or medical treatments. They do not perform spinal adjustments and they cannot counsel clients about emotional or spiritual issues as would be provided by a mental health or spiritual leader. If you experience symptoms that lead you to believe you may have a medical condition it is recommended that you visit a medical physician for diagnosis and treatment. For detailed description of the massage scope of practice in this state please visit the Board of Massage website at [www.anyboard.com](http://www.anyboard.com).

#### Adverse Reactions to Massage

Massage may lead to adverse reactions in certain situations or when used with certain conditions or medications. The massage therapist will evaluate your health history intake and ask you questions to make sure it is safe for you to receive massage. In the event that the massage therapist is uncertain that massage will be of benefit to you, he or she may ask your to provide a note from your physician stating that it is safe for you to receive massage. Please provide complete details of medical conditions, and medications to your massage therapist during the health intake interview. Failure to inform the massage therapist of all medical conditions and medications may place you at increased risk for adverse reactions.

#### Therapist Training and Experience

All of the massage therapists working at Any Massage Clinic have completed a minimum of 500 hours of massage training from a State-approved school and passed the State licensing requirements. Therapists at Any Massage Clinic specialize in Swedish massage techniques, deep tissue techniques, myofascial release techniques and hydrotherapy. Any Massage Clinic also has therapists who specialize in pregnancy massage, reflexology, spa body treatments and CranoSacral therapy. Pick up a menu of services from our receptionist to find out about these different forms of massage. We do not specialize in rehabilitative massage for soft-tissue injury. Please ask us for a copy of our preferred provider list in the event that we can't meet your particular needs.

#### Business Policies and Practices

You may book a thirty-minute (\$40), sixty-minute (\$60), or ninety-minute (\$75) session. Any Massage Clinic accepts cash, personal checks and all major credit cards. We do not bill insurance companies for services. Plan to arrive ten minutes early to update your paperwork and discuss any changes to your condition with your massage therapist. The first session usually requires a longer health intake process and so clients should arrive twenty minutes early on their initial visit. Clients arriving late will be charged for the full session and the session will end promptly at the scheduled time. Clients must cancel sessions with 24 hours notice or pay for the missed session in full. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 processing fee. Business hours are from 8 AM to 8PM. Walk in appointments are accepted providing therapists are available. Children and teens are welcome but an adult guardian must be present with the child or teen in the treatment room for the entire session.

Clients receive \$5 off their first massage at Any Massage Clinic. Clients receive \$5 towards a massage for each friend or family member they refer to the clinic who receives a session. Occasionally coupons for discounts on services are sent as part of our client newsletter. Sign up for our free newsletter with the receptionist. A tip to a therapist for exceptional service is optional but appreciated.

**FIGURE 4-1** Example of an informed consent statement and form. An informed consent statement and form is a document that fully informs clients about choices related to their care. It discloses policies and limitations of services that might affect their care. All of the national massage organizations require massage therapists to provide informed consent documentation to their clients as part of their codes of ethics. (*continued*)

### Expectations and Rights

The client is expected to demonstrate good hygiene and not use illegal drugs or alcohol before the session (the use of drugs and alcohol make it unsafe for the client to receive massage). Clients and therapists are expected to refrain from any behavior of a sexual nature including sexual jokes, use of nicknames, or immodest conduct. Sexual behavior from the therapist towards the client is grounds for therapist termination and may lead to a formal complaint filed with the State Board of Massage. This may lead to the loss of the therapist's license. Sexual behavior from the client toward the therapist is inappropriate and will lead to the termination of the session and refusal of further service.

The client has the right to prompt, professional service in an environment that is clean, private and safe. Client information is not shared with any members of the public or other health care providers unless the client releases the information in writing. A court of law may order the client's health care records released to the court as part of a legal proceeding. Therapists are obligated to report information about the abuse of a child, elderly person or mentally or physically challenged person in the event that such information is related during the session. Therapists are obligated to report threats of self-harm or threats that the client plans to harm another person to authorities.

The client has the right to end the session at any time should they feel dissatisfied or uncomfortable with the session in any way. Clients who are dissatisfied with a therapist are encouraged to contact the manager, (manager's name), at (manager's phone number). Formal complaints can be filed with the State on the Board of Massage website at [www.anyboard.com](http://www.anyboard.com).

### Your Massage Session

After you complete the health intake form you are taken to a private treatment room where the therapist will review the form with you and find out about the benefits you hope to achieve from massage. The therapist will customize the massage to meet your specific needs within the limits of his or her training, and scope of practice. The therapist will leave the room briefly while you undress and place yourself under the drape on the massage table. Only the area being massaged is undraped during the session. The breasts, genitals and anus are never undraped during a session, and every effort is made to respect and protect both the client and therapist's modesty. You may leave on your underclothing if you prefer. While the therapist will ask you about the comfort of the strokes, or if you are warm enough, conversation is generally discouraged. This allows you to relax fully and enjoy the session.

### Informed Consent

I, (client's name) \_\_\_\_\_  
 have read and understand the disclosures, policies and procedures of Any Massage Clinic and I would like to receive a massage session or request a session for my child or dependent. I understand the benefits and limits of massage and that massage may cause adverse reactions in certain situations. If I experience any discomfort during the session I will immediately inform my therapist so that he or she can modify the massage strokes. I understand that massage therapists do not diagnose diseases or conditions, prescribe medications or treatments, or perform spinal adjustments. I recognize that massage is not a substitute for medical treatment and should I need medical treatment I will seek out the appropriate health care professional (physician, psychotherapist, chiropractor, etc.). I understand that it is my responsibility to keep the massage therapist informed of changes in my child's or my dependent's health status, diagnosed medical conditions and medication changes. I understand that failure to inform the therapist of these changes may place my child, my dependent or me at greater risk of adverse reactions to massage. I release the massage therapist from any liability if I fail to disclose the appropriate health related information.

Client's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Therapist's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I authorize the therapists of Any Massage Clinic to provide massage to my child or dependent.

Name of Child or Dependent \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

FIGURE 4-1 (continued)

3. **Client expectations:** Ask the client to share about expectations for the session. It's sometimes helpful to ask, "What results do you want to achieve?" or "When you leave here today after your session, what do you want your body to feel like?" In a relaxation session, it is common for clients to want to feel more relaxed or to have less tension in a particular area. First-time clients may not know what to expect and may be anxious. They may have seen a picture of massage or read about the benefits of massage in a magazine. Perhaps, a friend described a positive massage experience. A client who has received only one previous

massage is likely to expect this massage to be exactly the same as the first. In this case, the client may wonder what's going on when you use a different style or techniques. In each of these circumstances, you can set the client up for a good experience by explaining that there are many different types of massage and then describing some of the techniques you plan to use and their effects.

Although concerns about the therapist's gender have diminished because people become more educated about massage, some clients want to choose the gender of their therapist and may be surprised if this was not



discussed during the booking phone call. In our culture, many men and women tend to feel more comfortable with a female therapist. Many women may feel less self-conscious about how their bodies look to other women. Some women have concerns about the potential sexual misconduct of a man based on some past experience, whereas others may worry that their male partners will feel uneasy that they have received massage from a man. Some men feel anxious about receiving an enjoyable experience from a man's touch. Cultural and religious beliefs can also influence clients. Although these stigmas can frustrate male therapists, this situation continues to improve because people embrace massage as a regular health care practice. All clients have the right to determine what happens to their body. If the client asks for a therapist of a specific gender, this request must be honored. Sometimes, a client's expectations of massage are not reasonable, however. In this case, outline for the client what is realistic and what is beyond the scope of massage.

4. **Determine treatment goals:** With the client's input, determine specific treatment goals for the session. This can be fairly simple, as in the following example, or fairly complex. In a wellness massage, treatment goals are based on the client's expectations and often help you focus on areas that need the most attention during the session. For example, the goals for a session might be to decrease bilateral neck tension, decrease upper back tension, and decrease foot soreness. You then know that you will be massaging this client's back, neck, and feet. Will the client want other areas massaged?
5. **Plan the massage:** Sometimes, clients only want selected areas to be massaged, or they may want a full-body massage with extra focus in certain areas. Clarify the plan before the session starts. You might say something like, "I'm going to start on your back to focus on your upper back tension and your shoulders. These tense areas are probably contributing to your neck pain. Would you like me to work on the back of your legs? Yes? Okay, then I will massage your legs before I turn you over and focus on your neck. Would you like me to massage your arms and the front of your legs? Great. How about your abdominal muscles? No? Okay, I will finish with a good 20 minutes on your sore feet." This is a good time also to ask clients about their music preferences and preferences for lubricants. When all these things have been decided, the session can begin.

### Transition to Massage

Before you leave the treatment room, show the client the massage table and explain the position you would like the client to take on the table after undressing. Because clients may feel very nervous about how much clothing they need to remove, it's important to reassure them. You might say

something like this: "Undress to your level of comfort. Some clients choose to remove all of their clothing and this is fine, and others prefer to leave on some of their underclothing, which is also fine. You will always be draped during the session, and I will only undrape the area where I am working. This is to keep you warm but also to preserve modesty." This is also a good time to check if the client needs to use the restroom before undressing. Unless the client needs assistance getting on the massage table, leave the room while the client undresses. Because some clients feel nervous that the therapist may walk back in while they are partially undressed, it helps to say that you will knock and wait to hear they are ready before you enter.

### Prepare Yourself for the Massage

Usually, clients need no more than 5 minutes to undress and situate themselves on the massage table. Use this time to warm up your hands and to ground and center your energy for the session. Use the restroom if you need to and wash your hands carefully directly before returning to the treatment room.

### The Massage

Knock and wait for the client's response. Enter the treatment room and greet the client again. If the client is in the prone position and cannot see what you are doing, explain your actions or movements (e.g., "I'm just going to start the music and turn on this space heater so you don't get cold."). A client who doesn't know what you are doing may become nervous when hearing you moving about the room.

1. **Bolster:** Decontaminate your hands and use bolsters to support the client's position on the table.
2. **Check in:** Ask the client about the room temperature and turn on a heater or add a blanket over the drape if the client is cold. Warm packs might be placed on the client at this time (discussed later in this chapter).
3. **Open the massage:** There are a number of ways to open a massage. You might choose to use a breathing exercise such as those described later in this chapter. You might apply a resting and holding stroke or perhaps add a creative flourish such as ringing a small chime to mark the start of the session.
4. **Follow the treatment plan:** Once the massage starts, follow the plan you discussed with the client. If you discover an area of particular tension that needs massage but was not part of the original treatment plan, talk with the client about this. It's as easy as saying something like, "Carole, I've found an area on your low back where the tissue is very bound up. I would like to spend some extra time working on this area. We didn't discuss this earlier, but would you mind if I cut some time off the massage of your legs to work longer on your low back?" Carole will answer yes or no or may ask a question. This negotiation helps minimize the power

differential and encourages clients to make decisions about their own body, as discussed in Chapter 3 in the section on ethics. Make sure to address each area where the client wants work.

Sometimes, new massage therapists frustrate clients by not getting to important areas in a timely manner. In one case, the client reported to the spa manager that she specifically requested 30 minutes of work on her back and 30 minutes on her neck. She told the therapist she didn't want any other areas massaged. The therapist massaged the client's legs, feet, and arms, and spent only 15 minutes on her back and 5 minutes on her neck. The manager questioned the new therapist and found that she felt uncomfortable with neck massage and was avoiding it. In school, she had learned a full-body massage routine, and that was what she was most comfortable doing. Ethically, this therapist should have explained her limitations up front and referred the client to another therapist until she had the skills needed to meet the client's needs.

5. **Close the massage:** The massage can be closed in a number of ways, as discussed later in this chapter. Many therapists match their massage opening to their massage closing. For example, if they opened with a breathing exercise, they close with a breathing exercise.

## After the Massage

Your actions following the massage help ensure the client has had a good experience:

1. **Transition out of the massage:** After closing the massage, remove the bolsters and ask the client to get dressed. Provide disposable wet wipes and a dry hand towel for the client to clean up or explain that amenities such as saunas, whirlpool baths, or showers are available. Sometimes, therapists give clients suggestions for activities they can use at home to improve the condition of their muscle tissue, such as stretches or self-massage. If you intend to give home care, ask the client to dress and remain in the treatment room. This way, you can demonstrate the stretches or massage techniques privately. If not giving home care, ask the client to meet you at the reception desk after dressing.
2. **Sale of retail product:** In many spas, the sale of retail product is required of all of the staff working at the spa. If you intend to sell retail products, know each product line well and think carefully about products that would truly benefit your client. Ask clients if they would like to hear about some of the products in the retail area that might be of benefit. If the client says, "yes," then outline one of two key products and show the client these products before processing the client's fee for the session.
3. **Collect the fee:** Back in the reception area, collect the fee for the massage and offer the client water. Clients appreciate bottled water they can take with them.

Ask if the client would like to book another session. Some therapists choose to collect the fee and schedule additional sessions before the massage. This way, the client can be on the way as soon as the session ends. Both methods are fine.

4. **Book a session:** Book the session and give the client an appointment card with the date and time.
5. **Say goodbye:** You might remind clients to pay attention to how their body feels as a result of the massage. Phrase this in "goodbye language" to avoid opening a new conversation that would be better in the privacy of the treatment room. Say something like, "Remember to keep track of how your body feels so we can discuss it when I see you at your next session." Shake the client's hand warmly as you walk toward the door. This behavior helps the client transition out of the massage session and back into the real world. It also helps to maintain the boundaries of the therapeutic relationship, end the session on a friendly note, and keep you on schedule with future clients.
6. **Chart notes:** Complete the chart notes and documentation for the session and file the client's record neatly.
7. **Change the room:** Cleaned, disinfect, and sanitize the treatment room as needed to prepare it and the massage table for the next session, as discussed in Chapter 3.
8. **Self-care:** You might now perform any regular self-care activities such as stretching or eating a snack before the next client arrives for a session.

Massage sessions involve interpersonal skills such as professional communication, ethics, and boundary setting and practical skills such as draping, bolstering, along with the actual massage techniques. The theory that underlies all of these skills is of primary importance. Without an understanding of the physiological effects of massage techniques, you wouldn't know which methods to use to address a client's neck tension. Without an understanding of the structures of the neck, you wouldn't know where to apply techniques. Each skill is important, and together these different types of skills create an accomplished massage professional. As you review this outline of a wellness session, think about areas where you would like to improve your efficiency and smoothness. For example, if you find that you always feel uncomfortable greeting clients and explaining the paperwork included in the health intake, practice these skills with a friend or supervisor. Practice what you will say and do out loud, as if it is really happening, until you gain the desired fluidity.

## Opening and Closing the Massage

Consider the following examples of how two different massage therapists open and close their sessions.

Steve pays attention to how he opens and closes his massages. He likes to use resting and holding strokes

and breathwork (described below). To open the massage, he places his hands on the client with clear intent and allows the client to accept and become use to his touch. He asks the client to take three deep breaths and release all body tension with each exhalation. Steve's touch is assured and firm. The client feels a therapist who is energetically balanced and focused and who has a plan. The client relaxes before Steve even undrapes a body area, confident that Steve knows what he is doing. The opening is a simple moment, and yet it can affect clients' trust level and willingness to allow their body to let go and relax. At the end of the session, Steve finishes the massage, redrapes the client, and places his hands in the same position as when he opened the massage; although this time, the client is supine. Steve asks the client to breathe deeply for three breaths and to slowly wake up with each exhalation. The exhalation of each breath brings the client gently back to the real world and leaves the client feeling peaceful.

Jay doesn't worry much about how he starts and finishes his massages. When he enters the treatment room, he fusses with the drape, leaves the client to look around for the massage lubricant, and then struggles to place the bolster under the client's knees. The client's body tenses to ward off the irritating sensations of all this disjointed activity. Jay undrapes the client's leg and starts massaging but soon leaves to adjust the volume of the music. When he returns to the client, he reminds the client to relax, but the client remains watchful for the first 20 minutes of the session. Once Jay settles into the massage, he has good massage techniques, and the client eventually relaxes deeply when Jay works on the posterior legs and back. The client is calmly drifting when Jay abruptly replaces the drape and says, "Okay, time's up, and I'll meet you up front in the reception area when you're dressed." He pulls out the bolster and leaves the room. The client gets up quickly from the massage table and gets dressed. The client has less muscle tension but feels oddly irritated.

The opening and closing of the massage are important moments because they "frame" the entire massage experience. The opening of a massage is a formal moment that recognizes the importance of what is coming. Massage is an opportunity for the body to change in a positive way, to release long-held tension, to rest, to recover, and to have a healthy experience of touch. In many ways, a massage starts the minute a therapist enters the treatment room and approaches the client. Even if the client is in a prone position and cannot see the therapist, root hair receptors in the skin will recognize changes in air movement and heat. This may trigger instinctive survival responses that cause the client naturally to be tense during the initial contact. It is better to look at the client, offer a verbal greeting, and approach slowly with therapeutic intent. Don't look around for bolsters or massage lubricant. Have everything ready before the client enters the treatment room so that your entrance into the room can be calm and relaxed.

The closing of the massage should leave a client feeling complete, peaceful, and balanced. You want the client to know the massage is ending before it actually ends and to start to return to normal waking consciousness smoothly without being jarred awake. Avoid abrupt closings that leave a client feeling rushed or disturbed.

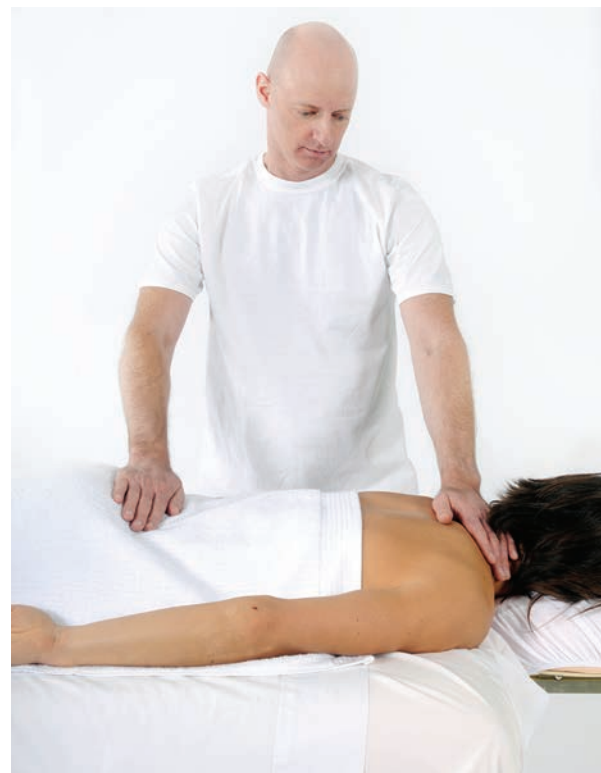
Therapists use a variety of techniques to formally open and close the massage, including resting and holding strokes, breathwork, aromatherapy inhalations, and auditory cues.

### Resting and Holding Strokes

In a resting or holding stroke, the hands are placed, without lubricant, on the client with the intent to greet the client and allow the client time to become accustomed to the unfamiliar touch. You might match your inhalations and exhalations to those of the client during a resting stroke to feel in sync with the client's rhythms. Tension in the client's body, the client's temperature and breathing patterns, and the quality of the tissue under your hands all convey an impression, which may affect how you proceed with the session (Fig. 4-2).

### Breathwork

Breathwork in massage is an important skill. A breathing exercise such as the **diaphragmatic breathing** technique described in For Your Information 4-1, the **pursed-lip**



**FIGURE 4-2** In a resting or holding stroke, the hands are placed, without lubricant, on the client with the intent to greet the client and allow the client time to become accustomed to the unfamiliar touch.

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION 4-1****Diaphragmatic Breathing**

Diaphragmatic breathing is used with the client in a supine position both to assess the client's breathing pattern and to educate the client about proper breathing. It works well to use this technique at the beginning of a session. Communication skills are key because you will "coach" the client into a functional breathing pattern. Focus on ensuring that the client's breaths are slow, rhythmic, and relaxed. Keep the exercise short enough that the client does not become concerned about losing time from the massage.



1. Place your hand on the client's abdominal area and ask the client to lift your hand with each inhalation up to three times.



2. Place one hand on each side of the ribs and ask the client to move your hands outward with the breath up to three times.

*(continued on page 76)*

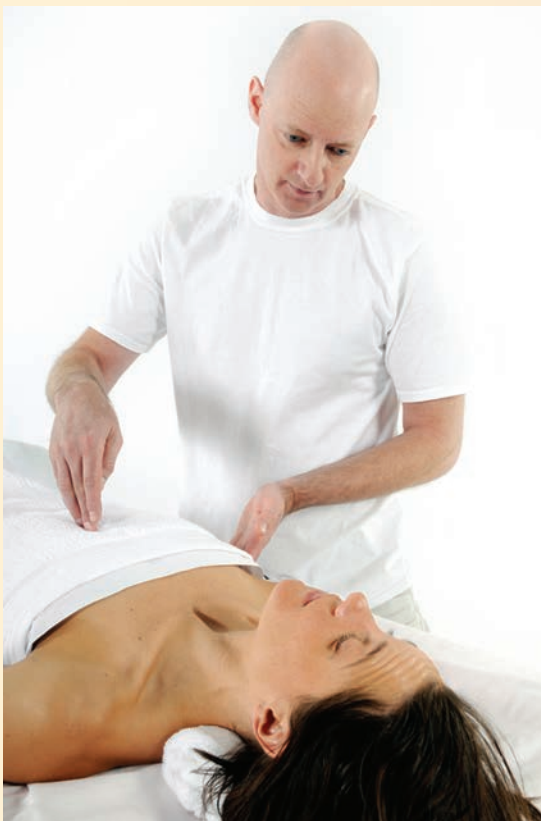


FOR YOUR INFORMATION 4-1

**Diaphragmatic Breathing (continued)**



3. Place the fingers of one hand on the lower section of the sternum and ask the client to lift your hand with each breath up to three times.



4. Have the client put the breaths together by cueing your hands. Ask the client to inhale first, filling up the abdominal area, then laterally expanding the ribs, and then allowing the chest to rise. Touch each area in order as the client inhales and pace the client on a full, even breath. As the client exhales, it can be effective to gently massage any areas of the upper neck that look tense, such as the shoulders, which may tend to pull forward or up during breathing. Repeat the cueing and coordinated breathing up to three times.

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION 4-2

**Pursed-Lip Breathing**

Pursed-lip breathing tones and strengthens the diaphragm and helps to reeducate the client's kinesthetic sense of breath. When the client exhales with lips "pursed" (Imagine the lips closing around a straw), this creates resistance for the diaphragm. The diaphragm contracts on the inhalation and relaxes on the exhalation. Pursed-lip breathing keeps the diaphragm working at the same time that it is relaxing. Use this technique at the opening or closing of the massage session with the client in a supine position or sitting up in a chair. As with diaphragmatic breathing, communication skills are important as you coach the client through pursed-lip breathing. Place your hand on your client's abdominal area and instruct the client to raise your hand with each inhalation by breathing in through the nose on a slow 2- to 4-second count. Demonstrate the pursed-lip position of the mouth for the client and instruct the client to exhale through the lips on a slow 4- to 8-second count. The client should exhale through the lips as slowly as possible. Practice the technique a few times. Clients who are interested in improving their breathing and toning the diaphragm can practice pursed-lip breathing 20 to 40 times, twice a day at home.

**breathing** technique described in For Your Information 4-2, or simply asking the clients to take three deep breaths can help clients drop into their body, center themselves energetically, and consciously release unnecessary muscle tension. Breathwork helps you tune into the client's breathing rhythms and thereby pace the massage to the client. Many people breathe with a disturbed pattern that can disrupt the delicate balance of carbon dioxide and oxygen in the blood. Proper breathing during a session revitalizes the body by ensuring the correct levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the body. The use of breathwork in a session helps clients become more aware of their breathing patterns and can lead to better breathing on a regular basis. Still, spa therapists must walk a careful line here. Too much focus on a breathing pattern can disrupt the client's relaxation experience and may cause resentment. Some clients resist breathwork because they just want to "get on with the massage." Breathing exercises used in wellness massage should be brief and to the point.

The diaphragmatic breathing technique and the pursed-lip breathing technique are brief enough to be used in every

session, as desired by the client, and can help clients develop greater breath awareness and help change poor breathing patterns. These exercises set the client up to breathe more evenly and deeply throughout the session, enhancing relaxation and ensuring proper amounts of carbon dioxide and oxygen in the blood.

**Breathwork throughout the Massage**

Breathwork is important throughout the massage and can be used in a variety of circumstances. Sometimes, you may notice that a client is taking a breath, holding it without conscious awareness, and then letting it out suddenly. Some clients regularly hold their breath without realizing it. You might say, "As I massage, try to focus on the even inward and outward movement of your breath. Try to make each breath full and complete. This will help regulate your breathing pattern and help relax your muscles." Clients then become aware of their breathing. Clients typically focus on breathing for a short time and then forget about it, but they are likely to breathe more regularly throughout the remainder of the session.

You can also match your own breathing to the client's to help pace the massage to the client's natural body rhythms. Alternatively, focus on your own breathing to add intention to a stroke or to ensure that your movements flow in harmony with breathing. In this case, you are likely to exhale as strokes move away from your body and inhale as strokes come back. Your breathing pattern can also cue a client to breathe more regularly. For example, if you take an audible inward breath at the start of the stroke, you may find that the client joins in. As you exhale during the application of the stroke, the client might again follow along.

Clients can be encouraged to release bound muscle tissue with their breathing. As a muscle is lengthened, as you move from the origin of a muscle to its insertion during a stroke, or as you move from distal body areas to proximal body areas, encourage the client to take a full breath and then exhale as the stroke is performed. Your directions to the client should be simple: "Please take a full breath, and now, release it." If an area is particularly painful or tense, the client can use breathing to release the area or decrease the pain. For example, if you are applying a stroke on the back and, as you approach the rhomboid muscles, the client tenses and you feel increased muscle tension, you can say to the client, "I'm going to drop into this bound tissue. Take a full breath and feel as if you are using your breath to lift up my forearm. Good. Take another deep breath and feel the tension dissipate as you release the breath. Good!"

In certain stretching techniques, such as active isolated stretching and post-isometric relaxation, the use of breath is fundamental to the technique. Potentially painful methods such as trigger point therapy require a client to breathe through the technique to better tolerate the discomfort.

### Aromatherapy Inhalations

**Aromatherapy inhalations** are used either at the beginning or end of the massage (Fig. 4-3). One drop of an

oil or 1 drop of a blend of different oils is briefly rubbed together in the hands before being passed over the client's nose in an arc so that the oil can be enjoyed on a deep inward breath. The therapist then proceeds with the massage. Choose soothing oils such as a drop of lavender, mandarin, or cardamom at the onset of the massage to support the relaxation process. Stimulating oils such as peppermint, rosemary, or eucalyptus help the client "wake up" at the end of the session as part of closing the massage.

### Use of an Auditory Cue

An **auditory cue**, such as the ringing of a chime, can be used to signal the beginning and ending of the massage session. This opening might be paired with resting and holding strokes, an aromatherapy inhalation (described earlier in this chapter), or a breathing exercise. This form of massage opening and closing creates a sense of ritual and lends the session a more spiritual formality. Over time, an auditory cue may become linked in the client's mind with relaxation, causing an instantaneous relaxation response.

## Massage Enhancers

Therapists who would like to work in an established spa should make sure that their Swedish massage is flowing and elegant. Work to engage the tissue so that the strokes have depth and intent. Practice draping efficiently and incorporating a variety of strokes so that the massage feels complete. When developing a spa massage, try to make the service as luxurious as possible by adding several small but exceptional **massage enhancers**. These enhancers might include the use of steamy aromatic towels, aroma mists, a simple hand and



**FIGURE 4-3** Aromatherapy inhalations. Aroma inhalations are used either at the beginning or end of the massage. One drop of an oil or 1 drop of a blend of different oils is briefly rubbed together in the hands before being passed over the client's nose in an arc so that the oil can be enjoyed on a deep inward breath.



TABLE 4-1 Spa Massage and Enhancers—Sample Outline

SIMPLE AND SUMPTUOUS	AN EFFORTLESS INDULGENCE
1. Client supine, semireclined, and bolstered	1. Client prone and bolstered
2. Place a warm pack on the belly.	2. Place a warm pack on the back and on the bottom of the feet.
3. Place a drop of lemon oil in the hands and pass the hands in an arc over the client's nose for one or two breaths.	3. Place 1 drop of lavender oil on a tissue and tuck it into the bottom of the face cradle so that the client can smell a light fragrance.
4. Place an aromatic hot towel over each foot and steam the feet. Remove the towel and proceed with the foot massage.	4. Massage the posterior legs and gluteals. Undrape the back and place a steamy rosemary towel on the back.
5. Massage the anterior legs.	5. Massage the back. At the end of the back massage, apply a body wash gel with warm water and work it into lather. Remove the lather with a hot towel. Redrape the back.
6. Massage the arms and hands. Apply an exfoliation product to the hands and then remove it with a hot towel. Paraffin dip the hands and wrap them in cellophane and a warm towel.	6. Remove the warm pack that is sitting on the feet. Turn the client into a supine position. Place a warm pack under the neck and an eye pillow over the eyes. Rebolster the client.
7. Remove the pillows from under the client's head and proceed with a neck and face massage. Place a steamy aromatic towel on the face at the end of the massage.	7. Massage the feet. At the end of the foot massage, apply exfoliation cream to the feet and scrub the feet. Remove the exfoliation product with hot towels.
8. Remove the paraffin from the hands, remove the warm packs, and turn the client into the prone position.	8. Massage the anterior legs and abdominals.
9. Rebolster the client and massage the posterior legs and gluteals.	9. Massage the arms and hands.
10. Massage the back. Apply a foaming exfoliation product to the back and work it into lather. Remove with steamy aromatic towels.	10. Massage the neck and face. Place a steamy, aromatic towel over the face to end the massage. Remove the towel and use an aroma mist spritzed high over the client.
11. Spritz an aroma mist over the client and throughout the treatment room to complete the massage. When the client gets off the table, they will smell the fresh scent.	11. Allow the client to relax on the treatment table for an extra ten minutes before they get up.

foot treatment, paraffin dips, the use of warm packs, an eye pillow, and a firming face massage. The spa massage outline presented in Table 4-1 is meant to provide some structure for those developing a relaxation spa massage. The outline helps the therapist to see how the massage is enhanced with little extras to make it special. Step-by-step directions for some useful enhancers are described below.



**FIGURE 4-4** Warm packs. Warm packs of rice, corn, or flax seed keep the client warm and feel soothing and nurturing. Use them to enhance your relaxation massages.

## Warm Packs

Chapter 6 (Water Therapies) describes the use of hot and cold packs to facilitate a change in muscle tissue and to achieve a physiological effect on the body. In a relaxation massage, the goal is to support client relaxation and help clients rest, breath, and reflect on their inner thoughts and to feel revitalized at the end of the session. Warm packs of rice, corn, or flax seed keep the client warm but do not generate enough heat to produce perspiration (Fig. 4-4). They are used to make the client feel pampered and cozy and are placed on the back and on the feet. In the supine position, a warm pack can be placed on the belly, around the feet, and, if the shape is appropriate, under the neck. Eye pillows filled with fragrant herbs can be warmed or cooled and placed over the eyes to block out excess light. A Fomentek water bottle might be placed under the bottom massage sheet to provide warmth, or the table can be heated with an electric table warmer.

## Steamy Aromatic Towels

Steamy aromatic towels make a pleasing enhancer when used during a full-body relaxation massage (Fig. 4-5). For example, a steamy aromatic towel can be applied to





**FIGURE 4-5** Steamy aromatic towels. Steamy aromatic towels make a pleasing enhancer when used during a full-body relaxation massage. They might be applied to the back, face, or feet as part of your massage routine.

the back directly before the back massage. This warms the tissue and feels especially satisfying. Another way of using a hot towel on the back is to apply a bit of body wash gel or foaming exfoliation cream with warm water at the end of the back massage. Lather it with the hands and then remove the lather with a hot towel. This takes only 1 minute out of the massage but becomes a memorable moment for the client. Another benefit is that they don't feel oily at the end of the session. A steamy, aromatic towel can be used in the same way on the feet before the foot massage, on the face before the face massage, or on the face at the end of the service as a closing gesture.

### Preparing Steamy Towels

To prepare the towels, pull off all the tags, then fold the towels in half (the long way), and roll them up like a sausage. It is important that all the tags are removed because they could scratch the client. Place the towels in a hydrocolator, hot towel cabinet, or stone massage heating unit for 20 minutes at 165°F. With thermal gloves, remove a towel from the water, wring it out, and place it in a soda cooler. Close the lid of the cooler and remove the next towel. Keep the lid of the cooler shut as much as possible so that the towels stay hot throughout the treatment. Towels can be enhanced by soaking them in herbal infusions or adding essential oils just before use.

### Steamy Rosemary Towels

Add 3 to 5 drops of rosemary essential oil to the soda cooler full of hot towels. As each towel is removed, it will fill the treatment room with a refreshing scent. Most single oils such as eucalyptus, common sage (*Salvia officinalis*), Spanish sage (*Salvia lavandulifolia*), thyme and lemon oil smell good, but floral scents such as ylang ylang and jasmine are not as pleasant in steam. The essential oil on the towel is not likely to cause any

skin irritation because essential oils are volatile substances and begin to evaporate rapidly the minute that they are placed on the hot towels in the cooler. They will mostly burn off before the first towel is used, leaving only some of the scent behind. Skin irritation is therefore minimized.

### Herbal-Infused Towels

Muslin bags filled with fragrant herbs can also be used to scent towels. A muslin bag of herbs is added to the water that the towels are heated in. A nice combination is eucalyptus leaf, rosemary, clove buds, and juniper berry. A half a cup of herbs to around 16 quarts of water provides a nice concentration, although more or less herbs can be used according to taste. Towels heated in herbal solutions will be lightly stained.

### A Simple Hand or Foot Treatment

During a relaxation massage, a simple hand or foot treatment can be added to make the massage special (Fig. 4-6). These enhancers take up very little massage time and are a memorable part of the experience for the client. For a simple foot treatment, prepare the massage table by placing a bath towel at the end of the table where the client's feet will sit. Place two hot, moist hand towels in a soda cooler. Just before or just after the foot massage, simply apply a little exfoliation cream (a cream that has rough textured ingredients that polish



**FIGURE 4-6** A simple hand or foot treatment. During a relaxation massage, a simple hand or foot treatment can be added to the session to enhance the massage experience. Apply an exfoliation cream to the hand or foot directly before or after the massage and then remove the cream with hot, steamy hand towels.

the skin) to each foot. Scrub the feet with the exfoliation cream and then place a hot towel over each foot. After the feet have steamed in the towels (about 30 seconds), use the towels to remove the exfoliation product. A simple hand treatment is conducted in the same way. An exfoliation cream is massaged into the hand and up to the elbow. A hot, moist towel is placed over each hand, and the product is removed directly before or after the hand massage.

### Paraffin Dip

**Paraffin** is a waxy substance obtained from the distillates of wood, coal, petroleum, or shale oil. It is used to coat the skin and trap heat and moisture at the skin's surface (Fig. 4-7). This increases local circulation, which improves joint mobility and increases absorption of spa products whenever they have been applied before using the paraffin. It is an effective treatment for chronic arthritis, tight muscles, and painful joints. It also leaves the skin soft, and it feels warm and sumptuous.

To apply paraffin to the hands or feet, wipe or mist the area with alcohol so that it is properly sanitized. Dip the hand or foot into the paraffin and allow the paraffin to harden slightly before dipping the area again. Dipping the area up to five times should be sufficient. Wrap the paraffin-covered hand or foot in cellophane wrap or a plastic bag, before placing it into a heated mitt or a warm towel. To remove the paraffin, simply peel off the cellophane wrap together with the wax in one piece. The hands can be dipped while the client is on the table in the prone or semi-reclined position. The feet can be dipped while the client is on the table in the supine position. Paraffin can also be applied with a brush or on gauze strips, which wrapped around the body area.



**FIGURE 4-7** Paraffin application. Paraffin is used to coat the skin and trap heat and moisture at the skin's surface. Wipe or mist the hands or feet with alcohol so that it is properly sanitized. Dip the hand or foot into the paraffin and allow the paraffin to harden slightly before dipping the area again.



**FIGURE 4-8** Aroma mist. An aroma mist is usually made from distilled water with some added essential oils, but a hydrosol (flower water) can also be used. The mist is spritzed high over the client while he or she is in a supine position to fill the treatment room with a refreshing scent.

### Easy Aromatherapy Enhancements

Aromatherapy is the use of essential oils for healing and wellness. It is discussed in depth in Chapter 7. Small aromatherapy enhancements stand out as moments of particular radiance in a good relaxation massage. Essential oil massage blends create an olfactory reaction that may facilitate deeper relaxation in the client. It is a good idea to provide a selection of from three to five blends so that the clients can choose which one they like best. **Aroma mists** are another way to bring the pleasure of good smells into the massage. An aroma mist is usually made from distilled water with some added essential oils, but a hydrosol (flower water) can also be used. The mist is spritzed high over the client while he or she is in a supine position to fill the treatment room with a refreshing scent (Fig. 4-8). The scents used in the treatment can be varied to keep the client's olfactory "palate" stimulated.

Earlier, we discussed aroma inhalations, which might be used either at the beginning or end of the massage. As was mentioned previously, 1 drop of an oil or 1 drop of a blend of different oils is briefly rubbed together in the hands before being passed over the client's nose in an arc so that the oil can be enjoyed on a deep inward breath. Relaxing or calming oils are used at the beginning of the massage, whereas refreshing, stimulating oils are used at the end of the session.

Table 4-2 provides some nice aromatherapy blends that are generally popular with clients. These blends can be mixed into a plain massage cream or in expeller-pressed vegetable oil for the massage, or they can be mixed with water for an aroma mist. The table also includes a list of single oils that work well for aroma inhalations. Aromatherapy and blending techniques are discussed in Chapter 7.

TABLE 4-2 Easy Aromatherapy

MASSAGE BLENDS	AROMA MISTS	INHALATIONS
The following blends can be added to 1 fl oz of an expeller-pressed oil (i.e., hazelnut, sweet almond, sunflower) or plain massage cream. The numbers refer to drops.	The following blends can be added to 1 oz of distilled water.	The following blends can be mixed up and used undiluted (1 drop) in the hands for an aroma inhalation.
<b>Relax Factor</b>	<b>Radiance</b>	<b>Inspiration</b>
Frankincense 4 Mandarin 8 Ylang ylang 2 Cypress 2	Atlas cedarwood 5 Neroli 2 Lavender 4 Grapefruit 6	Rose 1 Mandarin 10 Clove 1
<b>Refreshing</b>	<b>Revitalize</b>	<b>Verve</b>
Rosemary 3 Clary sage 2 Lemon 7 Geranium 1	Grapefruit 8 Eucalyptus 1 Cypress 2 Sweet orange 6	Rosemary 2 Geranium 1
<b>Citrus Star</b>	<b>Summer</b>	<b>Sparkle</b>
Grapefruit 11 Jasmine 1	Mandarin 6 Lemon 7 Geranium 1	Peppermint 1 Grapefruit 8
<b>Muscle Ease</b>	<b>Rain</b>	<b>Siesta</b>
Sweet birch 3 Juniper berry 2 Lavender 6 Lemon 6	Juniper berry 4 Thyme 2 Lavender 6 Cypress 3	Lime 7 Jasmine 1
<b>Detox</b>	<b>Mental Boost</b>	<b>Quietude</b>
Sweet fennel 5 Juniper berry 4 Grapefruit 10	Rosemary 2 Basil 4 Lemon 7	Neroli 2 Clary sage 5 Sandalwood 10
<b>Body Boost</b>	<b>Sweet Dreams</b>	<b>Wake Up</b>
Peppermint 1 Tea tree 2 Lavender 6 Lemon 6	Neroli 2 Lavender 7 Mandarin 10	Peppermint 2 Rosemary 2 Basil 1

## Putting Your Spa Massage Together

The techniques used in Swedish massage form the foundation of most therapists' massage routine, even those practicing specific different forms or systems of massage. Swedish massage is sometimes called relaxation massage, but Swedish techniques have many benefits in addition to relaxation. In fact, Swedish massage techniques can be delivered with light, moderate, or deep pressure for a variety of treatment outcomes. Swedish massage still uses the six traditional stroke techniques given French names by Dr. Johann Mezger in the 1800s. These techniques are effleurage, pétrissage, friction, tapotement, vibration, and joint movements (also called Swedish gymnastics or range of motion techniques). Each of these techniques is performed with the depth and vigor most appropriate for the individual client. Therapists often integrate Swedish

strokes with other strokes, such as myofascial work, neuromuscular therapies, compression strokes, Asian bodywork methods, or with resting/holding strokes used to open and close massage sessions. An overview of Swedish techniques and considerations is provided in Tables 4-3 and 4-4 for review. Think about the individual strokes, how they tie together, their effects on the body, and how you palpate and adapt the techniques during a massage. The next step is then to understand how to sequence the massage and use the subtleties of massage skills.

## Sequencing

**Sequencing** refers both to the sequence of strokes (the order in which strokes are applied to a given body area) and to the overall sequence of the massage (the order in which body areas are massaged). In Swedish massage, the strokes often follow a defined progression from effleurage to pétrissage,

TABLE 4-3 Overview of Swedish Massage Techniques

STROKE	DEFINED	GENERAL EFFECTS	CONTRAINDICATION	VARIATIONS
Effleurage	A long, gliding stroke usually applied toward the heart	Desquamation of dead skin cells, increases circulation and lymph flow, triggers parasympathetic nervous system response, supports venous return, causes relaxation	Should not be used distal to an area of inflammation or injury; avoid application over open skin lesions, skin diseases, or bruises. Avoid prolonged application on the limbs of clients with cardiovascular disorders, high blood pressure, or circulatory conditions.	Superficial; moderate; or deep, shingling technique
Pétrissage	A rhythmic stroke that lifts the muscle off the bone and compresses it between the fingers	Stimulates sebaceous secretion, increases circulation and lymph flow, activates Golgi tendon organs (GTOs) to relax muscles, decreases adhesions	Avoid use with atrophied muscles that lack moderate tone. Do not use over open skin lesions, skin diseases, bruises, acute injuries, inflammation, or moderate to severe varicose veins.	Skin rolling, fulling pétrissage, and wringing pétrissage
Friction	A heat-producing chafing or rubbing stroke	Superficial friction is stimulating and warming and increases blood and lymph flow. Deep friction separates muscle fibers and breaks up adhesions and scar tissue.	Do not apply friction over open skin lesions, skin diseases, bruises, acute injuries, inflammation, or moderate to severe varicose veins.	Superficial friction, circular friction, linear friction, and cross-fiber friction
Vibration	A pulsating tremor-like or oscillating stroke	Primarily stimulating and then relaxing; sustained vibration is numbing and analgesic and decreases muscle guarding; fast vibrations can cause muscle contractions and stimulate nerves.	Do not apply vibration over open skin lesions, skin diseases, bruises, acute injuries, inflammation, or moderate to severe varicose veins.	Fine vibration; coarse vibration including jostling, shaking, and rocking
Tapotement	A rapid and rhythmic percussion stroke with which the hands are used in various formations to drum on the client	Short applications are stimulating; longer applications are relaxing. Very light tapotement causes vasoconstriction of capillaries in the local area. Moderate tapotement causes increased circulation, useful for loosening of mucus.	Do not apply tapotement over the kidneys, over bony areas, especially directly over the spine, or over bruises or varicose veins.	Light, moderate, hacking, cupping, beating, slapping, pincement, and tapping
Joint movements	Movements such as flexion, extension, abduction, and adduction performed as part of the massage	Stimulate the production of synovial fluid to nourish and protect the joint structure; increase range of motion	General contraindications include acute injuries to bones, joints, muscles, or nerves. Techniques that traction the joint are contraindicated for sprains, rheumatoid arthritis, and hypermobile joints. See specific contraindications in Table 13-1.	Active, passive, and restricted

to friction, to vibration, to tapotement, with joint movement added as appropriate. Each stroke addresses the tissue in a different way, and the sequence of strokes takes into account the physiological changes that have occurred in soft tissue during the preceding stroke. In a traditional Swedish massage, the therapist might simply deliver each type of stroke to the body area in a predefined order before moving on to the next body area. Alternatively, the order of the strokes might be changed to meet the client's particular needs.

Often, a therapist will combine different massage systems in a session, which may change the sequencing of the strokes. For example, if myofascial release techniques are being combined with Swedish massage and deep tissue work, myofascial techniques would probably be applied first because they are used on dry skin without lubrication. Deeper work

might be used directly after effleurage, pétrissage, and moderate friction with vibration and tapotement coming after. Another factor determining the sequencing of techniques is the quality of the client's tissue and how quickly it changes. Some clients need a prolonged warmup, whereas others are ready for deep work early in the session. Sometimes, areas of taut muscle tissue require work with very specific techniques to reset muscle length and promote better muscular balance.

As you contemplate how you want to sequence your massage, remember that there are advantages to starting the massage with the client supine and other advantages to starting prone. When the massage starts in a supine position, clients can open their eyes and look at the therapist. This is important if the client is new to massage and does not know the therapist. Being able to visually check with the client during the first half of the massage helps the client



TABLE 4-4 Overview of Swedish Massage Considerations

GENERAL BENEFITS	APPLICATION CHOICES	PALPATION	SUBTLE FACTORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desquamation of dead skin cells</li> <li>• Increased sebaceous secretion to condition skin</li> <li>• Increased blood and lymph circulation (increased tissue warmth)</li> <li>• Improved nutrient and waste exchange in local tissue</li> <li>• Improved venous return</li> <li>• Decreased muscle spasm, tension, and soreness</li> <li>• Decreased adhesions in myofascia</li> <li>• Decreased pain</li> <li>• Increased range of motion and joint health</li> <li>• Increased relaxation</li> <li>• Decreased symptoms relating to stress</li> <li>• Improved muscle tone</li> </ul>	<p>The effects of the massage technique on the body vary, depending on how the stroke is applied. Pay attention to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Technique:</b> gliding versus lifting</li> <li>• <b>Depth:</b> light versus deep</li> <li>• <b>Speed:</b> fast versus slow</li> <li>• <b>Direction:</b> toward the heart versus away from the heart</li> <li>• <b>Duration:</b> brief application versus prolonged application</li> </ul>	<p>Palpations skills increase with more experience. Develop palpation skills by being aware of what you see and feel during the massage session.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Visual:</b> How does the client look (skin color, expression, posture, etc.)?</li> <li>• <b>Move:</b> How does the client move (stiffly, lightly, forcefully, smoothly, etc.)?</li> <li>• <b>Touch:</b> How does the tissue feel (crackly, taut, fluid, hot, cool, clammy, etc.)?</li> <li>• <b>Sound:</b> How does the client sound when he or she communicates (relaxed, sleepy, anxious, fretful, etc.)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Intention:</b> client centered</li> <li>• <b>Contact:</b> quality of touch</li> <li>• <b>Use of lubricant:</b> Use lubricant in moderation. Remove excess lubricant if not absorbed into the skin.</li> <li>• <b>Pacing and leading:</b> Match the client's pace and then lead a client to more relaxing rhythms.</li> <li>• <b>Depth:</b> Engage the tissue unless a superficial massage is requested.</li> <li>• <b>Rhythm:</b> Use regular patterns or strokes and a regular tempo.</li> <li>• <b>Flow and continuity:</b> Techniques should flow in an uninterrupted action so the client experiences the constant and steady pressure of your hands.</li> <li>• <b>Stroke length:</b> Work the length of the muscle or the length of the body area.</li> </ul>

gain confidence and relax. Clients often experience congestion when they are placed face down in a face cradle. One of the advantages to starting the massage in the prone position is that the client's sinuses have time to decongest during the second half of the massage when they are turned into the supine position. This sequencing allows the client to leave the session feeling more alert and with less facial puffiness.

Specific treatment goals may also determine the sequencing of a session. For example, if the client has lower back pain, the therapist might choose to release the hamstrings and adductors of the legs before working the back and then turn the client supine to finish with psoas work and low back stretches. In health care-oriented massages, some regions of the body might not be massaged, allowing more time for problem areas and their associated structures.

Most important to sequencing the massage is the information the client provides during the intake interview. This process involves designing the session to meet the client's needs. It is a little like a negotiation. The client might say, "I want a lot of work on my back and legs." The therapist might say, "Do you only want me to work on these areas, or would you like a full-body massage with extra focus on these areas?" The client might then say, "I want you to work on my back, legs, feet, and neck with most of the work on my back." The therapist can also suggest areas the client needs to have massaged based on assessment findings. The therapist and client now have an agreed plan for the session.

The term *full-body massage* often means something different to the client than to the therapist. Clients sometimes say they want a full-body massage and then express dismay when their abdominals or gluteals are undraped and massaged.

Always be clear about what will happen during the massage by saying things like, "In a full-body massage, I massage the legs, feet, arms, back, neck, gluteal muscles (the muscles of the buttocks), abdominal muscles (the muscles of the belly), and the face. Would you prefer I avoid any of these areas?"

Although the client's wishes always prevail (unless they are asking for techniques that are contraindicated, illegal, or out of the massage scope of practice), the therapist can educate clients about the benefits of massage for certain areas. For example, clients often feel uncomfortable with the idea of having their gluteals or abdominal muscles massaged. When a therapist takes the time to explain the importance of releasing tension in these muscles, the client may feel safe enough to give it a try. The three examples of massage sequences in Table 4-5 demonstrate how diverse sequencing can be.

## Routines

**Routines** are a series of strokes that are planned in advance, delivered to body areas in a preset order, and practiced until they flow smoothly together. Some spas and massage clinics develop set routines that are delivered by all of the business's therapists. These standardized wellness sessions often include enhancing extras such as the use of warm packs, aromatherapy, and foot soaks to increase the sense of luxury and relaxation experienced by the client as we discussed previously. The drawback to standardized wellness sessions is that clients may not get the specific work they need for their particular areas of muscular tension. The advantage is that clients know beforehand what the massage will be like and can count on receiving the same massage when they

TABLE 4-5 Examples of Different Massage Sequencing

EXAMPLE SEQUENCE 1	EXAMPLE SEQUENCE 2	EXAMPLE SEQUENCE 3
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Begin with client prone.</li> <li>2. Place warm pack on the lower back.</li> <li>3. Open massage with holding strokes.</li> <li>4. Massage posterior legs.</li> <li>5. Remove warm pack and place on feet.</li> <li>6. Massage back.</li> <li>7. Remove warm pack.</li> <li>8. Turn client supine.</li> <li>9. Transition to anterior massage with diaphragmatic breathing exercise.</li> <li>10. Massage anterior legs.</li> <li>11. Massage feet.</li> <li>12. Massage abdominals.</li> <li>13. Place fresh warm pack on abdominals.</li> <li>14. Massage arms and hands.</li> <li>15. Massage shoulders and neck.</li> <li>16. Massage face.</li> <li>17. Close massage with holding strokes.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Begin with client supine.</li> <li>2. Place warm pack on abdominals.</li> <li>3. Open massage with diaphragmatic breathing exercise.</li> <li>4. Massage neck and face.</li> <li>5. Massage arms.</li> <li>6. Massage anterior legs and feet.</li> <li>7. Remove warm pack from abdominals.</li> <li>8. Turn client prone.</li> <li>9. Transition to posterior massage with holding strokes.</li> <li>10. Massage back.</li> <li>11. Massage posterior legs.</li> <li>12. Close massage with three deep breaths.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Begin with client prone.</li> <li>2. Place warm packs on hamstrings.</li> <li>3. Open the massage with holding strokes.</li> <li>4. Myofascial release to back.</li> <li>5. Swedish massage back.</li> <li>6. Deep tissue massage back.</li> <li>7. Remove warm packs from hamstrings and place on back.</li> <li>8. Myofascial release to posterior legs.</li> <li>9. Swedish massage posterior legs.</li> <li>10. Remove warm packs.</li> <li>11. Turn client supine.</li> <li>12. Myofascial release anterior legs.</li> <li>13. Swedish massage anterior legs.</li> <li>14. Massage abdominals.</li> <li>15. Psoas release work.</li> <li>16. Passive hamstring stretches.</li> <li>17. Passive lower back stretches.</li> <li>18. Massage neck and upper arms.</li> <li>19. Close massage with holding strokes.</li> </ol>

return for another session. When massage is used purely for relaxation, the predictable quality of a set routine can actually add to the client's sense of safety and ability to unwind. The danger for the therapist is that a set routine makes it easy to stop paying close attention to the individual client.

Routines for specific body areas are very useful in relaxation settings. For example, some therapists develop a very effective foot routine that helps them to build a loyal clientele who especially like foot massage. In many spas, the face is massaged while the body is cocooned in a body wrap. If a therapist has taken the time to develop a face massage routine that incorporates a variety of strokes, it is likely to enhance the client's experience. For Your Information 4-3 demonstrates a nice face routine. A foot routine is provided in Chapter 10 (Spa Foot Treatments).

The use of routines is not advised for health care-oriented massage or massage sessions in which the client and therapist have agreed on specific treatment goals. In these cases, the therapist must adapt the massage to the client's specific needs and to moment-by-moment changes that occur in the client's soft tissue structures. The term *routine* should not be confused with a "treatment protocol" in which a series of techniques are used in a particular order. For example, in trigger point work, the protocol is to warm the area with friction strokes or skin rolling before the trigger point is located and treated. Joint movement and flushing strokes are applied after the trigger point has been treated to help reset the muscle's normal resting length.

### Subtle Factors That Influence the Massage

If you are a novice massage therapist who is still a student or entering your first massage-related job, you will want to master each individual technique before trying to combine

techniques in a flowing, integrated professional massage. After mastering these core skills, you can consider how subtle factors such as intention, depth, stroke length, and rhythm profoundly influence the client's massage experience.


### Therapist's Intention

It is always important to ground and center yourself before a session. This helps to calm your energy and focus your mind so that you are fully present during the session. Some therapists forget this principle and talk loudly; bang into things; fuss with supplies, the drape, or the music; and cause such static in a room that the client cannot completely relax. Before entering the treatment room, take a moment to center and ground your energy. Pay attention to your tone of voice and volume. Talk softly but not so softly that the client has difficulty understanding your verbal directions. Everything should be ready for the session before the client undresses and moves into position beneath the drape. If the music level is set and music is playing; if the lubricant is warm and within reach; and if extra blankets, bolsters, and draping material are readily available; you are likely to feel more centered and grounded.

When working with a therapeutic intention, maintain appropriate professional boundaries and work in such a way that the client will not experience emotional, physical, mental, or spiritual damage from the session. Therapeutic intention also includes the idea that you are focused only on the session. You are "present," "in the moment," and paying attention to the client's facial expressions, sounds, soft tissue, and communication. When you walk through the door of the treatment room, everything but the client should go away. Set aside all thoughts about bills, relationship problems, to-do lists, and plans with friends so that you focus only on the client.

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION 4-3

**Face Massage Routine**

Ask clients if they would like their face massaged as part of their relaxation session, especially if the client is wearing makeup. If the client is wearing makeup, she may want to remove it before the massage to enhance her enjoyment of the session and protect her skin. Rich emollient face cream or whipped shea butter is recommended for this treatment. Massage oil, massage cream, or massage gel are not recommended because these products may leave facial skin feeling clogged and bogged down. Before touching the client's face, the therapist's hands should be sanitized with an alcohol-based sanitizer. This will prevent any microbes that were picked up on the body or in the treatment room from being transferred to the delicate facial skin and will ensure that the therapist's hands smell clean to the client. The therapist may want to drape the client's hair to protect it from face cream using the simple hair draping method described in the next chapter. To view a video demonstration of face massage, visit [thePoint](#). 



Apply an aromatic towel to the face. Remove a steamy rosemary or herbal-infused towel from a cooler and drape it on the face by spreading it from under the chin to the forehead. Allow the towel to sit on the face for up to 1 minute and then gently press it into the face to increase the sensation of heat. Remove the towel from the face and repeat with a second towel if desired.



Apply a rich emollient facial cream starting under the chin, coming up around the mouth, around the nose, up the nose to the forehead, and down the sides of the face to the chin. Repeat this technique six to eight times to spread the cream evenly over the surface of the skin.



Perform gentle cross strokes between the eyebrows.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION 4-3

Face Massage Routine (continued)



Transition into s-bows and cover the whole forehead with s-bow strokes.



Transition to glide down either side of the nose and activate the pressure points at the top of the nose and bottom of the nose as the fingers circle. Repeat this technique three to six times.



Transition into small figure of eights using light finger pressure and glide over the entire face, chin, and forehead with this technique.

*(continued on page 88)*



FOR YOUR INFORMATION 4-3

Face Massage Routine (continued)



Slide a relaxed hand over one eye in a circular motion and finish the stroke with pats at the side of the eye. Repeat this four times and transition to the other eye.



Make small circles around both eyes at the same time and then transition to the chin using small finger circles.



Lightly pétrissage the jaw line and s-bow the chin, then use a crossed thumb technique at the chin.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION 4-3

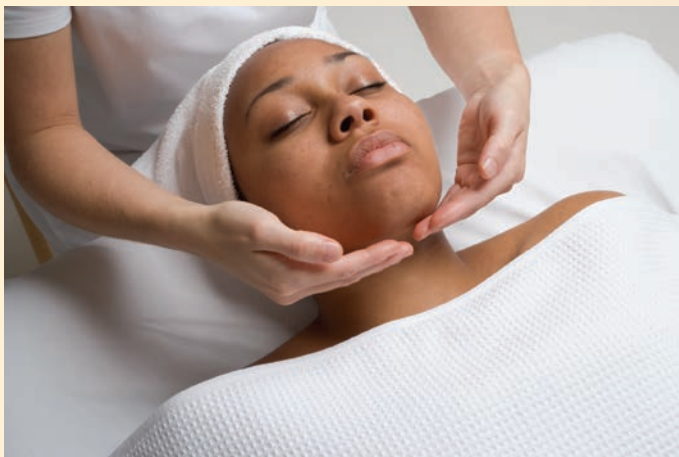
Face Massage Routine (continued)



Use the index finger and the thumb on both hands to apply a lifting technique around the upper and lower lips.



Bring the thumb and index finger of one hand around the mouth in five to seven strokes to smooth the tissue at the sides of the mouth.



Using soft hands and relaxed wrists, apply a gentle slapping tapotement to the underside of the jaw.

*(continued on page 90)*

FOR YOUR INFORMATION 4-3

Face Massage Routine (continued)



Bring the gentle slapping tapotement up the jaw line and cheek area and then transition back to underneath the jaw.



Transition from the slapping tapotement into a "snapping" tapotement and apply the stroke to the jaw line and cheek area on both sides of the face.



To learn this stroke, make a pinching movement with the thumb and index finger but instead of meeting the fingers, lift them up off the face.



## FOR YOUR INFORMATION 4-3

## Face Massage Routine (continued)



Soothe the sides of the face with gentle upward strokes toward the top of the forehead.



Gently massage the outer edge of the ear and push the ear forward to stretch it. Massage the area directly behind the ear and finish the area by laterally flexing the neck to one side during a long stroke down the neck, over the shoulder and down the arm. Repeat this stroke on the opposite side.



The facial sequence can be repeated up to three times for a longer face massage. To end the face massage, place 1 drop of peppermint or lemon oil in the hands and rub them together and cover the nose lightly for 30 seconds. A second steamy, aromatic towel can be placed over the face, or place a cool towel over the face to finish the service.



## Contact

The quality of your touch is important, and you must think about what your hands are communicating to the client. Warm, soft, dry, open, and confident hands tell the client that you are relaxed and self-assured and know what to do. Cool, damp, uncertain hands tell the client that you are anxious or doubtful about the session. Cultivate confidence in your touch. Do not just touch the client but feel the tissue, open your hands, and sink into the muscle. Once you establish contact, avoid disrupting it. Sometimes, novice therapists take their hands off the client repeatedly while transitioning between strokes or lift their hands off the body to get more lubricant. Instead, try to keep at least one hand in contact with the client at all times. This helps the client to keep track of your presence and the progression of the massage.

## Use of Lubricant

In a Swedish massage, most strokes require the use of lubrication to prevent undue friction between your hands and the client's skin. Use the lubricant in moderation. When the client is too slippery, your hands cannot sink into the tissue and manipulate it effectively. After undraping a body area, turn one hand over and set it on the client's skin with the palm side up. Pour a small amount of lubricant into your palm and warm it by rubbing your other hand across it, staying in contact with the client's skin. Turn both hands over and apply long strokes over the entire undraped body area to spread the lubricant. As the lubricant is absorbed into the skin, work the strokes deeper into the tissue. If the skin becomes dry and the strokes start to drag, apply more lubricant (some drag on the tissue is desirable with certain strokes). Again, do not break contact with the client. Keep one hand in contact with the client's skin while warming the lubricant in your hands. If you accidentally apply too much lubricant and it is not absorbed into the skin during effleurage strokes, remove some of the lubricant with a hand towel. It's better to take a moment and remove the lubricant than give a slippery superficial massage of the body area. Most clients do not want to feel oily at the end of the massage. It is a good idea to provide disposable "wet wipe" towels and a dry hand towel for the client to use at the end of the massage if you use oil for the lubricant. Creams and lotions cause less slip but also feel cooler on the client's skin.

## Pacing and Leading

All people have an internal pace or personal "rhythm" that influences how fast they move, how quickly they react, the speed and cadence of their speech, their physical mannerisms, the speed of their thought processes, and even their breathing patterns. At the same time, a client is likely to arrive in a particular state of mind and body (state of being). Perhaps he or she encountered bad traffic and is running late. Perhaps the client just came from a yoga class and is feeling balanced. Maybe the client is feeling depressed because of personal issues. Regardless of the cause of the client's mental, emotional, and physical state, try to meet

the client halfway and tune in to the client's rhythm and state of being. For example, it may be disconcerting for a mildly depressed client to walk through the clinic doors and encounter the therapist Chirpy Mary Sunshine. Similarly, it may be off-putting for an upbeat client who is enjoying a great day off to encounter the therapist Low Energy Larry.

Therapists can learn to "pace" the massage by matching the first part of the massage to the client. As the massage progresses, the therapist can "lead" the client into more relaxing rhythms. To understand "pacing" and "leading" better, consider one aspect of a counseling and life-coaching technique from neuro-linguistic programming (NLP). NLP uses the word *pacing* to describe techniques that build rapport between the counselor and the client. The idea is that people tend to *like* people that they *are liked*, so the counselor makes himself or herself *more like* the client. The counselor tunes in to the client's breathing patterns, speech patterns, body language, and personal rhythm. During the session, the counselor uses speech and body language patterns similar to those of the client. When the client is relaxed and when the counselor feels that a rapport has been established, he or she starts to lead the client. The counselor breathes with a new pattern, and the client follows (so long as good rapport has been established). The counselor slows down (or speeds up) his or her speech and changes his or her body language, and the client follows. All of this is done while the client and counselor are talking about other things. The benefit of this for the client is that these new breathing patterns, body gestures, and/or speech patterns create a "shift" in the client. It is almost as if these new patterns put a person in touch with new internal resources that allow looking at a situation from a new vantage point.<sup>1</sup> NLP is much more complex than this simple description, but this example can help massage therapists think about how they pace and lead clients.

The goal is to match the client's basic energy levels but not mimic the client or go to extremes of behavior. For a client and therapist both to be bouncing off the walls with hyperactive energy does not do the client any good. Instead, be upbeat but remain grounded until the client can be led to more relaxing patterns. If a client is downhearted, you might still remain positive but subdue your personal energy levels and speak in a quiet voice to respect the client's state of being.

## Depth

Massage therapists sometimes call a superficial massage a "fluff and buff." Although some clients like gentle massage that only skims the surface of the tissue, most clients want the therapist to sink into the tissue, take hold of the tissue, move the body with confidence, and address tension and any adhered muscle and fascia. This should not mean that you are working so deeply and with so much pressure that the client feels pain. It means that you can feel the quality of the tissue and understand how to engage it properly. Working with appropriate depth is a product of good palpation skills and self-confidence.

To build these skills, pay attention to the way a client's tissue feels and how it changes in different areas of the body. In a Swedish massage, effleurage starts out light and quickly gains depth as the body area softens. Circulation increases in the local area, and the tissue begins to “melt,” signaling that you can drop deeper into the muscle and fascia. Feel for the “bottom” of the muscle. Think of sinking into a pillow or other soft structure. Drop down and maintain an even pressure as the stroke travels the length of the body area. One way to learn about depth is to practice on clients or fellow students and ask for honest feedback. Ask direct questions like, “Is my pressure deep enough or would you prefer more pressure?” If the client answers “more pressure,” sink in and feel what it feels like to sink in. Ask again, “Is this deep enough or should I be deeper?” Keep asking until the client communicates that the pressure is just right. Feel what “just right” feels like and remember that feeling. Remind clients to speak up if something hurts or feels too forceful.

Remember to practice massaging a variety of body types when learning to work with depth. Each body responds to pressure differently, and you must adapt to the tension levels and density of the individual tissue. The more massages you give as a student, the faster you develop these skills. If it happens that you start out working with too much depth and a client complains about the pressure, try to avoid becoming fearful but simply promise yourself to pay more attention to the quality of the tissue. It is okay to work too lightly or too deeply at first. No therapist walks out the training room door and has perfect depth the first time he or she gives a massage. These skills are developed over time through practice and mindfulness.

### Rhythm

Rhythm in massage is a lot like rhythm in dancing. Therapists with good rhythm apply strokes in a regular pattern at a regular pace or tempo. The client relaxes to the rhythm, much as a child relaxes when rocked by a parent. Imagine how pétrissage strokes would feel if delivered in an uneven pattern. That sensation may well be distracting and disturbing for the client. Sometimes, the rhythm of the massage changes naturally because you change strokes or techniques. Deep work is most often applied very slowly, whereas tapotement is applied more quickly. You might deliver the first few passes of effleurage at a quicker tempo and then slow down to lead a client into relaxation.

To build good rhythm, think about the regularity of strokes and strive to keep them even in both depth and speed. Use music to set the pace for the massage and “dance” the strokes as a training exercise. Check in with your practice clients and get feedback on their perception of the rhythm of the massage. As with all massage skills, rhythm is developed over time and with practice.

### Flow and Continuity

Flow and continuity refer to the progression of massage strokes from one technique to another and from one body area to another. Think of a river streaming over rocks in one unbroken

movement. Strokes are like the river water. They should flow in one uninterrupted action so that the client experiences the constant and steady pressure of your hands. A therapist who has not yet developed flow and continuity might pause during strokes, lift the hands off the client, change techniques at the wrong times, and feel disjointed and sporadic.

Changing techniques at the wrong times is a common mistake of novice therapists. For example, it is a bad idea to start with effleurage on the calf muscles, shift to tapotement at the hamstring, then to pétrissage as the stroke approaches the gluteal muscles, and then back to effleurage as the stroke moves into the gluteals. The nervous system cannot process these rapid technique changes and may become hyperalert and irritated. Instead, start effleurage at the ankle, sweep all the way up the leg, and come all the way back down the leg before shifting techniques.

The great ballet choreographer, Balanchine, often choreographed dance sequences in groups of three. He felt that the first time an audience saw a dance sequence, it captured their attention but they did not have time to really see the moves. When the sequence was repeated a second time, Balanchine believed that the audience studied the movement and analyzed the technique. The third time a sequence was danced, the audience could simply enjoy the beauty of the movement. Although massage strokes would not be delivered in strict groups of threes, the same philosophy applies. A client needs time to be surprised by a sensation, analyze what is happening, and then settle into enjoyment of the technique.

### Stroke Length

A therapist with strong massage skills tends to use long strokes that tie body areas together. He or she will travel the length of a muscle's fibers, or the length of a body area, before changing techniques or lifting the hands away from the client's body. When a stroke is cut short, it leaves the client feeling oddly frustrated. One area where this happens is on the posterior and anterior leg. Inexperienced therapists often stop short in the stroke because they are taught to be careful of draping and worry that the stroke will become invasive. The stroke should travel all the way up to the gluteals and around the greater trochanter, or all the way up to the anterior superior iliac spine (ASIS) and back again. On the arm, the stroke should travel up to the shoulder or even up to the neck. Understand the muscles and seek to work their entire length whenever possible. Many therapists undrape one or the other side of the client and travel from the foot, up the leg to the back, and then return to the foot again. These strokes build clients' kinesthetic awareness of their bodies and how different body areas relate to each other.

By learning and integrating the techniques and subtle skills discussed in this chapter, you are preparing to give an excellent relaxation massage that will help to reduce stress in the clients, rejuvenate their energy levels, relieve muscular tension, and help the body to find balance. This level of integrated work is what keeps clients coming to your business for repeat massages.

## SPA FUSION

### INTEGRATION OF SKILLS



#### STUDY TIP: Party! That's Right. Party!

Students in massage and spa training programs sometimes feel like their social lives are curtailed by the need to study. One way to study and also have some social time is to hold a study party. To be productive, the party should have clear learning objectives and planned activities. For example, the schedule might be planned like this:

- 1 to 2 p.m.—Aromatherapy review—led by Steve
- 2 to 2:30 p.m.—Essential oil properties flash cards—led by Ellen
- 2:30 to 3:00 p.m.—Food! Everyone brings one dish for a potluck
- 3:00 to 4:00 p.m.—Spa Massage Olympics (See explanation below.)
- 4:00 to 10:00 p.m.—Watch a movie and more food!

#### SPA INSPIRATION: Spa Massage Olympics

A beautiful, flowing spa massage requires careful thought and lots of practice. One way to make this process fun is to hold a Spa Massage Olympics. Ask your instructor to set a date and arrange for three judges. Make a set of large cards with the numbers 1 to 10 for each judge. It works well to have judges score participants on areas such as correctness of stroke application, draping skills, routines, sequencing, use of enhancers, flow and continuity, rhythm, etc. Arrange for prizes and generate some enthusiasm! You can learn a lot by practicing for your event and by watching your competition perform. If your instructor does not have time for this in the class schedule, this is a fun activity for a study party.

#### IT'S TRUE! Diaphragmatic Breathing Exercises Support Different Client Groups

Several research studies on diaphragmatic breathing exercises demonstrate that this technique can help a diverse group of clients meet health care goals as long as the technique is practiced regularly. In one study, asthmatic adults who practiced diaphragmatic breathing exercises experienced a significant reduction in the medication they used to treat asthma and a lower intensity of their symptoms. This reduction in symptoms led to increased physical activity, which improved their overall health. Unfortunately, most participants decreased their practice of diaphragmatic breathing after the study and relapsed into previous

medication levels and sedentary habits.<sup>2</sup> Another study showed that diaphragmatic breathing lowered blood pressure as long as it was practiced regularly.<sup>3</sup> Patients with anxiety disorders and panic attacks found that the diaphragmatic breathing exercise helped them experience less fear, fewer cognitive symptoms, and fewer catastrophic thoughts during an attack, and the technique sometimes served as an intervention to prevent an attack.<sup>4</sup> Finally, patients suffering from chronic low back pain improved significantly with breath therapy (a variety of techniques were taught including pursed-lip breathing and diaphragmatic breathing). This study reports that “changes in standard low back pain, measures of pain and disability were comparable to those resulting from high-quality, extended physical therapy.” Again, the regular practice of these methods was important for continued benefit.<sup>5</sup>

#### CHAPTER WRAP-UP

The topics in this chapter illustrate the diverse skills needed by a professional massage therapist to manage a client before, during, and after a relaxation massage session. These skills involve four primary areas: communication skills, organization skills, client management skills, and exceptional hands-on skills. Getting clients in and out the door involves many steps along with giving them an exceptional bodywork experience in between. An organized therapist, skilled at client management, can better plan and implement a meaningful opening and closing of the massage that add to the client's experience and help build client loyalty. Therapists often emphasize learning advanced soft tissue skills and fail to fully appreciate skills that seem less technical, such as positioning and draping and sequencing a relaxation massage appropriately. Although it is desirable to master a range of therapeutic techniques, the foundation skills of draping and fluid relaxation massage lead to an uninterrupted client experience and allow the client to relax completely and enjoy the session. Underlying all of these skills is the ability to communicate effectively when explaining paperwork to clients, directing them to the treatment room, describing the benefits of a technique, giving direction during the session, and coaching the client through an activity such as diaphragmatic breathing. Lack of skills in any of these areas can directly impact the therapist's ability to attract and retain clients and make a good living from massage.

## SPA FUSION

### INTEGRATION OF SKILLS (continued)



#### REVIEW QUESTIONS

##### Multiple Choice

1. A waxy substance obtained from the distillates of wood, coal, petroleum, or shale oil that is used to coat the skin and trap heat and moisture at the skin's surface is called:
  - a. Seaweed
  - b. Fango
  - c. Paraffin
  - d. Steam
2. A series of strokes that are planned in advance, delivered to body areas in a preset order, and practiced until they flow smoothly together is called:
  - a. A sequence
  - b. Pacing
  - c. Leading
  - d. A routine
3. Additional session elements or small complementary treatments that increase the client's enjoyment of the session are called:
  - a. Add-ons
  - b. Up sells
  - c. Enhancers
  - d. Additions
4. This type of massage is used to decrease stress, support the body's natural restorative mechanisms, and reduce temporary pain from overexertion caused by activities such as weekend athletics or by unusual work stress:
  - a. Wellness massage
  - b. Health care massage
  - c. Orthopedic massage
  - d. Hospital massage
5. When 1 drop of an essential oil is briefly rubbed together in the therapist's hands before being passed over the client's nose in an arc so that the oil can be enjoyed on a deep inward breath it is called:
  - a. Opening the massage
  - b. Closing the massage
  - c. An auditory cue
  - d. An aromatherapy inhalation

##### True or False

6. \_\_\_\_\_ Warm packs of rice, corn, or flax seed keep the client warm and increase the client's enjoyment of the session.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The tags on hand towels used to remove product from the client's body should be left intact so that you always know how to launder the towels properly.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ The use of a paraffin dip on a client's hands for stiff joints is outside the massage therapy scope of practice.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Essential oil massage blends create an olfactory reaction that may facilitate deeper relaxation in the client.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Flow and continuity refer to the progression of massage strokes from one technique to another and from one body area to another.