



Introduction to Aromatherapy Massage

Course Manual

Christina Lyne
christina@aromalyne.com www.aromalyne.com
01243 586804

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Introduction

Welcome to this Introduction to Aromatherapy Massage Course. The aim of this course is to show you how to carry out a basic aromatherapy massage to use at home. This is not a professional qualification and so does not qualify you to carry out a massage in a professional capacity.

Main Topics Covered by this Course

- Aromatherapy Massage Movement
- Vegetable/Base Oils
- Head, Neck and Shoulder Massage Routine
- Arm Massage Routine
- Abdomen Massage Routine
- Front of Leg Massage Routine
- Back of Leg Massage Routine
- Back, Neck and Shoulder Massage Routine

Aromatherapy Massage Movements

Aromatherapy massage classifies the massage techniques used into four main categories:

1. Effleurage
2. Petrissage (or compressions)
3. Frictions
4. Vibrations

Effleurage

The word comes from the French verb 'effleurer' which means to stroke or to glide. Effleurage is a sweeping, stroking movement. It is an introductory stroke that is performed at the beginning of a massage sequence, and often at the end of it as well. But it can also be used as a connecting or link movement at any point during the massage procedure. The strokes are long and flowing, and generally cover as large an area of skin as possible. This type of stroke enables the therapist to become familiar with the client's skin, the client to become aware of the therapist's touch, and the underlying muscles and tissues to be sensitised. It also facilitates the application of a massage medium to the area.

The effleurage stroke is smooth and flowing, following the contours of the skin, as if the therapist's hands are moulded to the area of skin they are working over. Most commonly, the palmar surfaces of both hands are used, but one hand, thumbs, or fingers may work better on smaller areas.

Effleurage strokes follow the venous and lymphatic flow and so will affect the flow of blood and lymph in the vessels. The firmer effleurage stroke is always towards the heart, and the hands maintain contact on the return of the stroke, but apply little pressure.

Effleurage may be applied superficially or deeply and is usually applied slowly. In order to perform effleurage effectively, the therapist's wrists need to be flexible and the hands relaxed. The fingers should be relaxed

and held closely together and the thumbs should also be relaxed and abducted.

The benefits and effects of effleurage:

- It has a soothing effect on the nerves thus inducing relaxation.
- It provides continuity and flow during a massage, and provides a link to other manipulations.
- Increases both blood and lymphatic circulation.
- Helps to spread the massage medium.
- Aids tension relief, by relaxing contracted and tense muscles.
- Aids the removal of dead skin cells (desquamation).
- Helps to reduce non-medical oedema which can be the result of poor circulation and tiredness.
- Warms the tissues, helping to prepare them for deeper strokes.
- Soothes areas that are too sore or painful for deeper work.

Stroking also comes under the heading of effleurage. The difference between effleurage and stroking is that stroking can be performed in any direction and the hands may lift off the skin.

Feathering is an extremely light stroke and is barely perceivable by the person who is receiving the massage, but has a profoundly soothing effect.

Draining (Lymphatic Drainage)

Developed in the 1930s, lymphatic drainage is a delicate form of massage that stimulates the body's lymphatic system, improving the metabolism, helping the body to eliminate waste and toxins and providing a boost to the immune system.

How does it work?

The lymphatic system is responsible for helping fluid and waste leave the body and for regulating the immune system. When the lymphatic system becomes blocked, fluid builds up and stagnates, causing the entire system to become toxic thus making us feel sluggish and more susceptible to viral or contagious diseases.

By stimulating this system through massage, it is able to work more efficiently, which in turn boosts the immune system, clears blockages,

eliminates toxins, transports nutrients to cells and increases the metabolism.

What does it involve?

Unlike some other forms of massage, lymphatic drainage utilises a very light pressure combined with soft pumping movements in the direction of the lymph nodes.

What is it good for?

Lymphatic drainage massage is especially useful for individuals who seem to suffer regularly from common illnesses like colds and flu. It is also recommended for people who lead sedentary lifestyles, or those who want to reduce puffiness or swelling. It has been cited as having a positive effect on problem skin, cellulite, dysfunctional respiratory systems and people with low energy.

Petrissage (or compressions)

The word petrissage comes from the French word 'petrir' which means to knead. These strokes are much deeper than effleurage strokes, and are usually applied with the thumbs, fingers or heels of the hands. These movements firmly pick up and lift the tissues from the underlying structures and then release, resulting in an intermittent pressure. Petrissage movements help to:

- Aid in the elimination of waste products.
- Break down adipose tissue.
- Act as a decongestant.
- Release muscular tension, fatigue and stiffness.
- Breakdown adhesions.
- Aid relaxation.

Petrissage movements include kneading, picking up, wringing and rolling.

Kneading

Kneading is a circular movement where the hand moves the skin on the deeper tissues. The hands do not move over the skin except to move to the next part to be treated. This technique can be performed in several

ways i.e. by using both hands, one hand or just part of the hand (double-handed, single-handed or palmar kneading).

Pressure is applied firmly in the upward part of the circle and then released. This ensures that the pressure is applied in the direction of the venous return to the heart and lymphatic drainage to the lymph nodes. The pressure can be increased by the use of body weight and care must be taken to avoid pinching the skin at the end of the strokes.

The benefits and effects of kneading:

- Compression and relaxation of the muscle tissue causes the blood and lymphatic vessels to be stimulated, thereby increasing the circulation and hastening the removal of waste products, including urea.
- An improved blood supply accelerates the removal of lactic acid and carbon dioxide, helping to relieve muscle fatigue, soreness, stiffness and tension.
- It relaxes hard, contracted muscles and helps to loosen adhesions.
- It can help to maintain tone and elasticity of muscle tissue due to an increased blood supply.
- Can help to breakdown adipose tissue.

Picking Up

Picking Up is a manipulation where the tissues are lifted away from the bone, squeezed and released before moving on. It can be performed with one or both hands depending on the area to be massaged.

The technique is to grasp the muscle with the whole hand with the thumb abducted. The muscle is lifted away from the underlying structure, squeezed and then released. The other hand then picks up a different part and the movement is repeated along the length of the muscle. It is important to ensure that contact is not broken between movements and that the palm of the hand is in contact with the muscle to avoid pinching.

The benefits and effects of picking up:

- It stimulates blood and lymphatic flow.

- It improves elasticity and stretches tight muscle fibres and so is especially useful before and after exercise.
- It helps to soften hard, subcutaneous fatty tissue.

Wringing

Wringing is a petrissage movement similar to picking up. The tissues are compressed and picked up from the bone as in picking up, but instead of then being released they are passed from hand to hand in a wringing movement. The tissue is grasped and stretched.

Wringing is always performed with both hands. The arms must be held well out to the sides, with elbows bent. Muscle and superficial tissue is compressed and scooped up between the fingers and thumb of each hand, and then the fingers of one hand pull the tissue towards you, while the thumb of the other hands pushes it away. The hands move along the length of the muscle, wringing as they go. Keep the fingers and thumbs straight, so that they do not dig in.

The benefits and effects of wringing:

- To improve elasticity by stretching along the length of the muscle.
- To soften hard, subcutaneous tissue.
- To improve local circulation.

Rolling

Hands are firmly on the area and the superficial tissues are grasped between the fingers and thumbs and gently rolled backwards and forwards against the thumbs and fingers.

Frictions

The term comes from the Latin word 'frictio', meaning to rub. Frictions are very localised manipulations performed with the fingers or thumbs over small areas. They may be applied transversely across muscle fibres or in a circular movement.

They are deep movements performed with a lot of pressure.

With transverse frictions the pressure is selected at the outset and kept constant throughout.

With circular frictions the pressure may get progressively deeper. The pressure must, however, be completely released before moving on to a new area.

Frictions are often performed on dry skin, free from oil, so that the fingers move the skin and do not slip over it. The stroke is not to be confused with digital or thumb kneading, which apply constant upward pressure using a circular movement.

The benefits and effects of frictions:

- Increases blood and lymph circulation and dilates the capillaries.
- Softens and stretches the fascia and breaks down adipose tissue.
- Breaks down adhesions and nodules and scar tissue.
- Helps improve the function of ligaments and joints that it is performed over.
- Has an invigorating effect through the stimulation of nerves.
- Aids interchange of tissue fluids, and elimination of waste products.
- Aids in relaxation.

Vibrations

This movement involves producing a fine tremor or shaking in the tissues. The effects are produced by the therapist vibrating the hands or fingers, in an up and down or side to side movement. Generally, one hand works whilst the other supports the part; sometimes both hands are used.

Vibrations can be static (performed in one place) or running (moving up and down).

Use the palmar surface of the hand, the pads of the fingers or the distal phalanx of the thumbs (the smallest bone that forms the tip of the thumb). The muscles of the forearm are contracted continually and then relaxed to produce the vibration movements.

The movements may be fine, deep or invigorating depending on the effect required. Much co-ordination and practice are needed to perform the moves correctly.

This movement can be used when the muscles are tense or tight and not responding to petrissage or frictions.

Another vibration manipulation is 'shaking', a bigger movement that produces a shaking of the muscle. This is particularly effective when performed over the chest to loosen secretions and mucous in the lungs.

The benefits and effects of vibrations:

- Helps to relieve fatigue.
- Helps to relieve tension and aid relaxation, having a sedative effect.
- Stimulates and clears nerve pathways.
- Relaxes muscles reducing pain and stiffness.
- Warms the tissues.

Oil as a Massage Medium

Vegetable/Base Oils

Vegetable oils are known as **Fixed Oils** because they do not evaporate. This distinguishes them from the volatile oils in plants. In Aromatherapy they are also known as Base Oils because they form the base to the essential oil blend.

Vegetable oils have their own therapeutic properties and make their own contribution to the treatment. For example they:

- Minimise friction in a massage.
- Contain vitamins, minerals and lipids or fats.
- Carry the volatile essential oils which then evaporate and penetrate deep into the skin.
- Nourish the whole body and can help nutritional deficiencies including essential fatty acids.

Examples of oils you can use:

- Sweet Almond
- Grapeseed

These two oils will allow you to carry out a full massage as they are not absorbed quickly into the skin and so minimise friction within a massage.

There are also oils which are thicker and are absorbed more quickly into the skin but are deeply nourishing and moisturising. If you want to use these oils then you add them in a 5% dilution to Grapeseed or Sweet Almond.

Examples of these oils are:

- Avocado
- Jojoba
- Evening Primrose

Head, Neck and Shoulder Massage Routine

Ask the client to lie on their back and breathe deeply.

- Place your hands on the client's shoulders while they relax.
- Apply a small amount of oil to the face and ears (or you do not have to use oil).
- With your first two fingers gently run them along from the tip of the nose and over the forehead. Repeat 5 times.
- With your first two fingers gently run them from the centre of the forehead to the outside hairline. Repeat 5 times.
- With your first two fingers gently tap from the centre of the forehead to the outside hairline. Repeat 5 times.
- With your second finger apply light pressure points from the inside of the eyebrow to the edge. Repeat 3 times.
- With your second finger apply light pressure points underneath the eye along the edge of the zygomatic bone. Repeat 3 times.
- With your second finger apply slow effleurage (stroking/draining movements) along the sinuses. Repeat 5 times.
- Gently pinch along the jawline with thumb and index finger.
- Gently massage the outer ear and ear lobe with thumb and index finger.
- With your first two fingers gently run them along from the tip of the nose, over the forehead and into the hair. Repeat 5 times.
- Apply light effleurage stroking to the head and hair.
- Apply oil over the upper chest and around the shoulders.

- Effleurage starting at the centre of the chest and come around outside the shoulders and up the neck to the occipital bone. Repeat 3 times.
- Friction movement with the thumbs over the chest area.
- Kneading into the shoulders.
- Effleurage into a traction movement stretching the neck.
- Fingertip kneading around the scalp.
- Finish with effleurage around chest and shoulders.

Arm Massage Routine

- Effleurage the whole arm.
- Picking Up and kneading around the biceps and triceps (petrissage).
- Thumb rotaries around the elbow.
- Picking Up and kneading around the forearm
- Effleurage the whole arm.
- Firm stroking to palm of hand using thenar muscle.
- Zig Zag movements down the palm using firm pressure towards the wrist.
- Zig Zag movements to the wrist.
- Rotate and gently pull each finger.
- Effleurage the whole arm.
- Hold arm up and effleurage underneath the arm towards armpit for draining.
- Effleurage to the whole arm.

Abdomen Massage Routine

- Effleurage to external obliques x3
- Wringing to whole of abdomen x3
- Single handed deep effleurage to external obliques x3
- Stroking to large intestine, pressure to ileo-caecal valve x3
- Single handed deep effleurage to external obliques x3
- Diamond shaped effleurage to whole abdomen x3
- Effleurage to external obliques x3

Front of Leg Massage Routine

- Effleurage the whole leg.
- Thumb drainage movements to side of shin bone.
- Wringing and picking up to back of gastrocnemius.
- Effleurage up to knee.
- Gentle effleurage around patella (do not go over the patella).
- Effleurage over quadriceps.
- Kneading and wringing and picking up to quadriceps.
- Effleurage whole of leg.
- Palmar stroking to plantar surface of the foot.
- Thumb stroking to plantar surface of the foot (scissor movements followed by a squeeze out action).
- Wringing with thumbs on plantar surface of the foot.
- Thumb kneading to dorsal surface of the foot.
- Squeeze between each toe.
- Finish with effleurage to whole leg.
- Repeat on other leg.

Back of Leg Massage Routine

1. Effleurage the whole leg.
2. Firm stroking to the achilles tendon.
3. Wringing to the gastrocnemius.
4. Thumb kneading to the gastrocnemius.
5. Effleurage the whole leg.
6. Wringing to the hamstrings.
7. Kneading and picking up to the hamstrings.
8. Effleurage the whole leg.
9. Repeat on other leg.

Neck, Shoulder and Back Massage Routine

- Effleurage firmly up each side of the spine, across trapezius, around shoulders and lightly down the sides.
- Reinforced Palma kneading around the iliac crest up the side of the back and around the scapulae.
- Reinforced figure of 8 around scapulae.
- Reinforced kneading to whole of back.
- Thumb kneading up the sides of the spine.
- Single handed picking up to the back of the neck.
- Wringing to trapezius.
- Effleurage firmly up each side of the spine, across trapezius, around shoulders and lightly down the sides.
- Move to stand at top of shoulders and apply friction movement across the top of the shoulders.
- Thumb kneading around the shoulders and shoulder blade.
- Glide down to iliac crest and thumb knead around the iliac crest.
- Traction movement to iliac crest.
- Move back round to the side of table and effleurage the whole of the back and shoulders.
- Transverse stroking to lumbar region.
- Deep thumb rotaries to lumbar region.
- Effleurage firmly up each side of the spine, across trapezius, around shoulders and lightly down the sides.
- Finish Movements