

# Module 9 : Hand/Arm Massage

**By the end of this module, you will know:**

- What an arm/hand massage is and how to integrate it in to a nail treatment
- About the anatomy of the arm, wrist and hand
- Different massage techniques
- About communicating with your client effectively regarding the massage

## 9.1: Basic Arm and Hand Massage

Instead of just moisturizing your client's hands during a manicure you can add more luxury by performing a hand and arm massage as described below

**The arm and hand massage conducted by a professional nail technician is the most rewarding part of a manicure.**

Anyone can cut their nails, polish and paint them to a certain level. However, it is impossible for someone to give themselves an arm and hand massage that is relaxing. When offering nail services it is important that the nail technician offer a proper arm and hand massage that will help improve circulation and dexterity for their client.

There are steps provided in this module to help you learn the proper basics for a massage. To massage correctly it is important to know the arm and hand muscles that can cause knots, pain, and be tightened due to use.

A massage is supposed to target the muscles and nerves to relax them as a way of making your client feel better.

## 9.2: Anatomy of the Arm, Wrist and Hand

The forearm to the wrist and the hand will be the area you massage.

### Forearm

The forearm has two long bones called the radius and ulna, which forms the radioulnar joint with membranes that connect the two bones. Around the bones are many muscles, some of which are more important to your massage technique than others.

The flexors and extensors of the digits and flexor of the elbow are often used for typing and lifting. The pronators and supinators are what allow the hand to face down or upwards. The radial nerve helps the extensors move, while the median nerve moves the flexors.

There is also the ulnar nerve that runs the entire length of the forearm. When massaging you want to be careful to use a slight touch around the nerves, but you also need pressure to help work out the muscles.

### Hand

The hand has 27 bones including phalanges and metacarpals. It is the metacarpals that connect the fingers to the wrist. For muscles the hand can be divided into two groups: extrinsic and intrinsic. Intrinsic muscles run through the thumb and little finger, as well as providing four dorsal muscles (back of the hand muscles).

There are also lumbrical muscles that link to the deep flexor.

Extrinsic muscles are on the underside including two flexors that link to the forearm. They enter the finger bones through

tendons. These are the muscles mostly responsible for the ability to move the fingers up and down, curl them as well as how you type. The Thenar group of extrinsic muscles link to the thumbs to make grasping by the thumb possible.

With many muscles spread throughout the hands, as well as many bones, it is important to be light in touch. It is very easy to bruise the back of the hand or pull a muscle in fingers by being too rough during a massage.

## **Basic arm, wrist and hand anatomy**



## 9.3: Massage Medium

Already you have the client soaking their hand in preparation for cutting and shaping the nails.



This is relaxing and you will have to apply lotion to the cuticles for their health.

A natural part of applying lotion is to ensure the entire arm and hand is relaxed. You want to choose a massage medium that will be light, so as not to be painful, but one that is also stimulating to the muscles and nerves. Always ask your client how the massage feels to avoid any uncomfortable pressure.

## 9.4: Starting the Massage

Differing schools of thought will tell you to either start from the hand and move up to the elbow or the opposite way around.



In traditional massage schools and in keeping with Asian traditions it is best to move from the elbow down. The idea is for the flow of blood and oxygen to be moved into the extremities of the body while also removing toxins by working it out from the elbow through the finger tips.

You will hold the client's hand in one hand to offer support while you massage with the other hand.

## 9.5: Technique

The first time you begin, start with the oil rubbing it from the elbow down to the hand. This is before you apply the cuticle lotion.



If you want to you can also use lotion instead of oil. It is best to ask the client for their preference in the event of allergies; especially, if you typically use a scented lotion or oil.

Once the oil is rubbed in you can determine which technique you would like to use. Massage technique for nail technicians is usually a slight pinch of the skin as you work out the knots and stretch the arm.

Not all clients like this technique, so you may want to vary it with a deeper massage using your hands, particularly your fingers to kneed the skin and work on the knots the person may have in their arms.

As stated, you always want to work in a downward motion towards the fingers relaxing the arm as you go.

## 9.6: Hand Portion of the Massage

For the hand portion of the massage, you still want to use a light touch using your fingers and thumb.



Start with the palm of the hand. The thumb should be run down the center of the palm and out each finger and thumb. You will also want to lightly pinch the skin between the thumb and index finger and in between each finger. A little pressure for a few moments is a reflexology massage option. It is designed to relax the hand and help work out stress in other parts of the body the person may be feeling.

For the back of the hand hold it in your two hands, using your thumbs to massage while gently flexing the hand. Again pull your hand down the fingers to give a light pull and massage each finger. As you do this to one arm the oil or lotion is being rubbed in, while the client is feeling more relaxed.

## 9.7: The Wrist

**Once you have the arm and hand relaxed it is time to spend a little time with the wrist.**



You want to gently move the wrist up and down. You also want to massage a little around the wrist with your thumbs. To finish up lace your fingers with the client, hold the wrist, and gently flex the wrist backward.

At the end of the process you are going to give a few light motions up and then down the arm to truly relax the arm. You will need to repeat the process for the other hand.

## 9.8: Upward Motion

**An upward motion may be more appropriate for the salon you work at.**



Many nail technicians learn to go up rather than down. If you choose this method you will still start on the lower arm after you rub in the lotion.

You will go up the arm pinching the skin lightly, and rubbing a bit deeper with your hand. You will still hold the arm in one hand while you massage with the other.

## **9.9: Speaking with the Client**

**Now that you have an overview of the muscles and how they relate to the arm and hand movements, as well as information on massage techniques, it is time to consider the client.**



You definitely need to speak with the client before you start any massage.

Clients can have particular requests regarding the massage movements, technique, or they may have concerns. For example, an older client with arthritis may find your usual pressure is too much or a finger or two might lock up in a painful position based on the movements or nerves you touch.

Massaging the hand and lower arm is about more than just making the client feel better from the movements you make. It is also about the psychological aspects. A total massage mood



is needed to ensure the client can relax, feel the movements, and let their stress go. Reflexology is particularly popular as a hand massage technique because it is meant to reduce stress through the different movements and massage techniques you use, such as pinching the skin between the thumb and index finger.

It is a good idea to practice your technique with friends and family. They are the most honest when it comes to saying something about your technique; especially if they are truly willing to help you. Make certain that you practice your technique before you use it on clients.

While this portion of the course has focused on a downward motion, you may find the nail salon you are hired at requires an upward motion. Make certain you ask what is allowed.

## **Go and Practice**

*Estimated time: 60 minutes*

Find a friend or family member and practice the massage techniques discussed above. If you like, combine it with a manicure.

Once completed, come back and take the test.

## **Module Summary**

In this module you learned how to add more luxury to your nail treatments by incorporating a hand and arm massage.

You learned about the anatomy of the arm, wrist and hand and discovered the best techniques for massaging these areas.

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