

❗ I Have a Cold, Should I Get a Massage?+

You wake up in the morning sore and stiff because you were in bed all day yesterday with a cold. You realize you have a massage scheduled for today and your immediate thought is "ahhh, that will provide relief to my achy muscles and give me a brief hour of feeling good instead of feeling terrible.+"

Actually, getting a massage when you are sick with the flu or a cold is a bad idea. Depending on what stage of the illness you are in, the massage can send the virus zooming through your body by increasing your circulation. You might get better faster, but it is more likely you will feel a lot worse. In addition, when you go to a massage with a cold or flu you put your practitioner at risk to catch your illness.

Most massage modalities have a profound effect on the body's circulatory system facilitating the movements of fluid throughout your body. This is not good news if you are in the acute phase of the cold (typically the first 2 or 3 days). By moving fluids, we can spread the cold through the body much more effectively than would happen naturally.

On the other hand, if you are on the post-acute side of the infection (4 or 5 days after the symptoms have appeared), massage may help to speed recovery time. Be aware however that it is possible that the day after the massage feels like you are having a relapse. The circulatory work provided by the massage is the equivalent of squeezing 3 days of recovery into one day of feeling symptomatic again.

A good rule of thumb is that if you are developing a cold it is probably better to reschedule your massage and get some rest. Once you are in the post-acute phase of your infection, about a week after the first symptoms appeared, we can work together to ease the remaining discomfort and speed-up your recovery. If you have any doubt or question, always consult your primary care physician and your massage therapist.

