

Massage for Mechanical Neck Disorders (2012)

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COCHRANE BACK REVIEW GROUP
The best evidence in back and neck pain care

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Overview of the study

Objectives

- To assess the effects of massage on pain, function, patient satisfaction, global perceived effect, adverse effects and cost of care in adults with neck pain versus any comparison at immediate post-treatment to long-term follow-up

Methods

- Evidence current up to 4 February 2012
- Participants: Adults suffering from acute, sub-acute, or chronic neck disorders*
- Intervention: Massage (subtle energy manipulation based techniques excluded)
- Outcomes measured
 - Primary outcomes: pain relief, neck-related disability and function
 - Secondary outcomes: patient satisfaction, QoL, global perceived effect, adverse events, cost

*neck pain with/without radiculopathy, including non-specific neck pain of unidentified etiology, whiplash associated disorders, neck pain associated with myofascial pain syndrome, neck pain with degenerative change, and cervicogenic headache

Results & Conclusion

- 15 trials (810 participants) included

Treatment	Evidence	Quality of evidence
Massage	Certain massage techniques (traditional Chinese massage, classical and modified strain/counterstrain technique) may have been more effective than control or placebo in improving function and tenderness	Very low
	More beneficial than education in the short term for pain bothersomeness	Very low
Ischaemic compression and passive stretch	More effective in combination rather than individually for pain reduction	Low

⇒ The effectiveness of massage for neck pain remains uncertain and no recommendations for practice can be made.