

Massage Therapist

Professional Activities

Massage therapists treat clients by using touch to manipulate the soft-tissue muscles of the body. With their touch, therapists relieve pain, rehabilitate injuries, reduce stress, increase relaxation, and aid in the general wellness of clients.

Massage therapists typically do the following:

- Talk with clients about symptoms, medical history, and desired results
- Evaluate clients to locate painful or tense areas of the body
- Manipulate muscles or other soft tissues of the body
- Provide clients with guidance on how to improve posture, stretching, strengthening, and overall relaxation
- Massage therapists use their hands, fingers, forearms, elbows, and sometimes feet to knead muscles and soft tissue of the body to treat injuries and to promote general wellness. A massage can be as short as 5–10 minutes or could last more than an hour.

Therapists also may use lotions and oils, massage tables or chairs, and medical heat lamps when treating a client. Massage therapists may offer clients information about additional relaxation techniques to practice between sessions. Massage therapists can specialize in many different types of massage, called modalities. Swedish massage, deep-tissue massage, and sports massage are just a few of the many modalities of massage therapy. Most massage therapists specialize in several modalities, which require different techniques. Usually, the type of massage given depends on the client's needs and physical condition. For example, therapists may use a special technique for elderly clients that they would not use for athletes. Some forms of massage are given solely to one type of client; for example, prenatal massage is given to pregnant women.

Massage therapists work in an array of settings, both private and public, such as private offices, spas, hospitals, fitness centers, and shopping malls. Some massage therapists also travel to clients' homes or offices to give a massage. Most massage therapists, especially those who are self-employed, provide their own table or chair, sheets, pillows, and body lotions or oils.

Because massage is physically demanding, massage therapists can injure themselves if they do not use the proper techniques. Repetitive-motion problems and fatigue from standing for extended periods are most common. Therapists can limit these risks by using good techniques, spacing sessions properly, exercising and, in many cases, receiving a massage themselves regularly.

Educational Requirements

Massage therapists typically complete a postsecondary education program that can require 500 hours or more of study and experience, although standards and requirements vary greatly by state and locality. Most states regulate massage therapy and require massage therapists to have a license or certificate.

Training standards and requirements for massage therapists vary greatly by state and locality. Education programs are typically found in private or public postsecondary institutions and can require 500 hours or more of study to complete. Training programs may concentrate on certain modalities, or specialties, of massage. Several programs also offer job placement and continuing education. Both full-time and part-time programs are available.

Licenses and Certification

Although not all states require a license in massage therapy, they may have regulations at the local level. In states with massage therapy regulations, workers must get either a license or certification after graduating from an accredited training program and before practicing massage. Passing an exam is usually required for licensure.

The exam may be solely a state exam or one of two nationally recognized tests: the Massage and Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx) and the National Certification Examination for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (NCETMB). Massage therapy licensure boards decide which certifications and tests to accept on a state-by-state basis. The state of Illinois accepts both the MBLEx and NCETMB certifications.

Academic Programs

[Alvareitas College of Cosmetology-Godfrey](#)

[College of Lake County](#)

[Cortiva Institute](#)

[Elgin Community College](#)

[Everest College](#)

[First Institute Inc](#)

[Illinois Eastern Community Colleges](#)

[John A. Logan College](#)

[Kishwaukee College](#)

[Lake Land College](#)

[Midwest Technical Institute](#)

[Moraine Valley Community College](#)

[Morton College](#)

[National University of Health Sciences](#)

[Olney Central College](#)

[Parkland College](#)

[Soma Institute-The National School of Clinical Massage Therapy](#)

[Southwestern Illinois College](#)

[Universal Spa Training Academy](#)

[Waubensee Community College](#)

Employment/Salary Outlook

Continued growth in the demand for massage services will lead to new openings for massage therapists. The number of spas, which employ a large number of therapists, has increased in recent years. The number of massage clinic franchises has also been increasing, many of which offer more affordable massages than those at spas and resorts, making them available to a wider range of customers.

State and National Wages

Location	Pay Period	2021		
		Low	Median	High
United States	Hourly	\$11.75	\$23.62	\$37.99
	Annual	\$24,450	\$46,910	\$77,600
Illinois	Hourly	\$11.38	\$23.62	\$37.99
	Annual	\$23,670	\$49,130	\$79,010

State and National Trends

United States	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings ¹
	2020	2030		
Massage Therapists	144,600	191,100	32%	23,300
Illinois	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings ¹
	2018	2028		
Massage Therapists	6,750	7,990	+18%	980

¹Job Openings refers to the average annual job openings due to growth and net replacement.

Professional Organizations

Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (abmp.com)

National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (ncbtmb.org)

Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (fsmtb.org)

References

Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics
(<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/massage-therapists.htm>)

O*NET OnLine (<http://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/31-9011.00>)

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