

Nondrug Pain and Symptom Management

MASSAGE

Massage – Massage is provided using mechanical devices (e.g., personal massagers) or through the hands of an individual by using light pressure to rub, stroke, or knead parts of the body. Massage works by:

- Soothing pain and relaxing tense muscles
- Addressing specific locations of pain or relaxing the whole body
- Improving circulation

Massage application guidelines:

DO NOT:

- Use massage if it increases pain
- Massage areas being treated with radiation
 - Skin is more fragile
 - No lotions or powders on the area
 - If being treated for bone metastases, bones are at higher risk for fracture or increasing bone pain
- Massage over open wounds because of the
 - Possibility of infection
 - Risk of interrupting healing
- Massage lower extremities without checking with nurse because the person may be at risk for developing blood clots
- Massage areas with blood clots as these could become emboli
- Massage areas with pressure ulcers because massage could cause further damage

DO:

- Assess preference for touch before massaging
- Massage for 5-20 minutes using light pressure and a steady stroke
- Use lotions or essential oils if not contraindicated as this helps reduce friction against skin and moisturizes skin simultaneously
- Schedule massage at a specific time of day as this gives the person something to look forward to
- Can be done at the time of analgesic administration

CAREFUL:

- Use caution in older adults prone to skin tears or pressure ulcers
- Use caution over bony prominences as this may be uncomfortable/painful

Necessary equipment:

- Requires no special equipment unless using a personal massager
- Lotions or essential oils. The use of warm lotion is particularly calming. Lotion can be warmed in bath basin or under running water.

Directions:

1. Using warm lotion or essential oil, gently move hands over painful area using a consistent motion.
2. If using a personal massage, be sure to follow instructions accompanying device. Use light pressure to move the massager over affected area. Teach patients how to self-massage using device.

Adapted from:

1. Beth Miller-Kraybill, Nondrug Pain & Symptom Management in *Nursing Assistant End-of-Life: Computerized Educational Program*.
2. The Nursing Home Pain Management Algorithm Clinical Trial, R01 NR009100, 7/1/05 – 4/30/10; Mary Ersek (PI)

NOTE: Always check with nurse and check organizational policy regarding massage before utilizing this technique. The RN or CNA should only administer non-drug therapies that are within his/her particular scope of practice. Please follow the policies and procedures of your facility regarding administration of non-drug therapies.