

GUIDANCE NOTES
WEEK 11

WHAT	Massage
WHY	<p>When it comes to alleviating the aches and pains connected with Parkinson's, massage can be enormously helpful in improving the function of the body, helping you to relax and reducing pain, injury and anxiety.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our bodies have two nervous systems... the sympathetic and the parasympathetic. The sympathetic system triggers fight or flight. If you feel anxiety as a result of worry or fear, then your sympathetic system can be over stimulated. - However, during a massage, your parasympathetic response is increased and acts as a calming influence. <p>So with all these forms of massage there are two key potential benefits...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first is simply relaxation, and the potential to release general tension and let the anxieties of life disappear for a while. When you have a massage, your nervous system calms down... and this can help you prepare for sleep. • The second is longer term release of tightness and rigidity in muscles and an increase in blood flow. This can help to improve posture, flexibility and movement patterns, as well as reducing risk of pain and injury.
HOW	<p>The key in all types of massage is pressure. There are many different forms massage can take.</p> <p><i>From full body, 90 minute, professional massage... 10 minute, seated head-neck-and-shoulder massage ... Shiatsu ... foam rollers... and self-massage... to Swedish... deep tissue.... and acupressure.</i></p> <p>The 'gold standard' is professional, full body massage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is obviously a price tag attached to this, but many therapists offer discounts for people with medical conditions. For most the investment is worth it, whether once a week, once a month or just once a year. <p>Self-massage is a very cost effective alternative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since you are able to reach most areas of your body, self-massage is always available... and it's free! Simply rubbing your own neck, massaging your head, rubbing a tight hamstring or massaging a sore lower back can bring benefits.

- It also has the added benefit of being a form of movement, meaning you are not being still or inactive as you do it... whilst relaxing in front of the TV, for example.
- Ten to twenty minutes can have a really positive effect, and as always, try to ensure you're sitting or lying in a good position and are able to breathe deeply.
- Try to maintain symmetry by spending the same amount of time working on left and right sides, unless you have a particular pain or stiffness in one spot... and try to use your weaker hand, even though it may be uncomfortable or awkward, as this can be a form of strengthening for it.

And then you could enlist the help of a friend or your partner.

- Living with Parkinson's often causes stiffness in your neck and shoulder muscles, and they become tight and tense. Regular, simple neck and shoulder rubs, even for just 5 minutes can make a real difference.
- Exchanging neck and shoulder rubs with a partner or friend is a great idea, and returning the favour can be a very good form of hand control movement and strengthening for people with Parkinson's too.

Alternatively you could turn to a form of mechanical massage.

- This is not as good as human massage, but would be readily available in the home, so can be ready for use much more often.
- There are various machines and gizmos on the market, which can be particularly helpful for relaxing in the evening. These can be shoulder massagers, hand-held balls right up to full massage chairs.

The main message is to see massage, in whatever form, as part of your lifestyle. The benefits can be really significant and enjoyable, and the sense of well-being massage can leave you with can be immensely good for your health.