

## Hot Stones Massage

### What is a Hot Stone Massage?

Hot stone massage is a variation on classic [massage therapy](#). Heated smooth, flat stones are placed on key points on the body. The massage therapist may also hold the stones and use them to massage certain areas of the body.

The use of hot stones for healing dates back to ancient times, but it wasn't until Arizona massage therapist Mary Nelson introduced her hot stone massage technique, called LaStone Therapy, that the use of hot stones for massage caught on.

Nelson conducts workshops to train other massage therapists in LaStone. While LaStone continues to be popular, massage therapists and spas have also developed their own versions of the hot stone massage using heated, smooth rocks.

### How Does Hot Stone Massage Work?

The hot stones are usually made of basalt, a type of rock that is rich in iron, so they retain heat. River rocks are normally used because they are so smooth - they have been smoothed over time by the river's current.

The stones are immersed in water and heated in an electric heating device until they are within a certain temperature range. The stones may be placed at specific points on the back, in the palms of the hand, or between the toes.

The heat warms and relaxes the muscles, which allows the therapist to apply deeper pressure, if desired.

The warmth of the hot stones improves circulation and calms the nervous system.

Some massage therapists place stones on points that are thought to be energy centres of the body to rebalance the body and mind.

### Why Do People Get Hot Stone Massage?

Many people find the warmth of the hot stones to be comforting and get it for relaxation.

Hot stone massage is suited to people who tend to feel chilly or who have cold feet. It's also suited for people who have muscle tension but prefer a lighter massage. The heat relaxes muscles, allowing the therapist to work the muscles without using deep pressure.

People also get hot stone massage for a variety of health conditions:

- Back pain and aches
- Poor circulation
- Osteoarthritis and arthritis pain
- Stress, anxiety and tension
- Insomnia
- Depression

## How Do the Hot Stones Feel?

The hot stones are never rough. They are always flat and smooth. The hot stones used on the back are about the size of a large egg, only flat.

The stones are heated in an electrical heating unit that either provides a temperature reading or has an adjustable thermostat control.

The massage therapist always holds the stones first before touching them to your body, which ensures that the temperature will not be too hot. Everyone, however, has their own comfort range. Be sure to speak up if the stones are too hot for you.

Cool marble stones are occasionally used during a treatment, particularly if there is inflammation.

## What Can I Expect During my Hot Stone Massage?

The massage therapist often begins by applying oil to the body, which allows the hot stones to glide smoothly along the muscles. You are lying face down, and the massage therapist often then uses the hot stones to massage the back.

After the hot stones have relaxed the muscles, the massage therapist may put down the stones and use his or her hands to directly massage the skin.

The hot stones may then be placed back on to the body and left for a short period of time.

You are then asked to turn over onto your back. The massage therapist may place small hot stones between your toes or in the palm of your hand and repeats the sequence.

A typical hot stone massage is between 60 and 90 minutes long and ranges between £40 and £60.

## Precautions

Massage is not recommended for certain people:

- People with infectious skin disease, rash, or open wounds

- Immediately after surgery
- Immediately after chemotherapy or radiation, unless recommended by your doctor
- People prone to blood clots. There is a risk of blood clots being dislodged. If you have heart disease, check with your doctor before having a massage
- Pregnant women should check with their doctor first if they are considering getting a massage. Massage in pregnant women should be done by massage therapists who are certified in pregnancy massage.

Massage should not be done directly over bruises, inflamed skin, unhealed wounds, tumours, abdominal hernia, or areas of recent fractures.

### **Additional Hot Stone Massage Tips**

- Don't eat a heavy meal before the massage
- If it's your first time at the clinic or spa, arrive at least 10 minutes early to complete the necessary forms. Otherwise, arrive 5 minutes early so you can have a few minutes to rest and relax before starting the massage.