

**Hospital-Based Massage Therapy Clinical Guidelines**

Massage is defined as “the rubbing and kneading of tissue and muscles” and is contraindicated for patients with:

Systemic contraindications

- PLT <20
- Pulmonary embolism

Localized contraindications

- Patients being treated with doxorubicin liposomal (Doxil®), capecitabine (Xeloda®), or 5-fluorouracil (Acrucil®) continuous infusion for more than 24 hours because these drugs have the potential to cause palmar-plantar erythrodysesthesia (PPE), or hand-foot syndrome.
- Active blood clot
- Phlebitis
- Lymphedema\*
- Side effects dependent, patients being treated with taxane- and platinum-based chemotherapy

Touch Type and Pressure Guidelines		
Level	Pressure Description	Pressure appropriate for
0	Still Touch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stationary, weightless, full hand contact</li> <li>• Still Touch is not considered “massage”</li> </ul>	Patient experiencing severe effects/side effects of disease or treatment: active blood clot, pulmonary embolism
1	Light Lotion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slight skin movement if any at all</li> <li>• Slow nurturing strokes with full hand contact</li> </ul>	Patient experiencing severe effects/side effects of disease or treatment: bone metastasis, bruising, edema, extreme fatigue, fever, fragile skin, nausea, neuropathy, PLT >20 <50
2	Gentle Massage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Superficial movement of tissue and muscle</li> <li>• Slow nurturing strokes with full hand contact</li> </ul>	Patient experiencing moderate effects/side effects of disease or treatment: bone metastasis, bruising risk, edema, fatigue, lymphedema*, lymphedema risk, nausea, neuropathy, neutropenia, osteoporosis, PLT >50 <100

Patient intake questions specific to intended massage area

- Are you being treated for a blood clot?
- Do you have any lesions or open wounds?
- Were any lymph nodes removed during surgery or included in radiation or SLNB?

Assessments

- Presence or risk of lymphedema
- Neurotoxicity grading scale for peripheral neuropathy

**\*Rationale for patients with symptoms of lymphedema**

Due to the cubital/popliteal lymph node drainage pattern towards the axillary/inguinal lymph nodes it is contraindicated to massage the forearm or lower leg area without preliminary lymphatic system preparation. Patients who present with signs or symptoms of lymphedema in upper or lower limbs should have massage restricted to the hand or foot area only.