

COLLEGE OF MASSAGE THERAPISTS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

CONTRAINDICATIONS TO MASSAGE THERAPY

(A working document of the College, intended as a guideline and support tool for massage therapy educators and students, and for practising RMTs. This version current to April 2010)

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES (requiring First Aid and/or send to Doctor/hospital)

Anaphylaxis, Appendicitis, Cerebrovascular Accident (Stroke), Diabetic coma, Insulin shock, Epileptic seizure, Myocardial infarction (heart attack), Pneumothorax, Atelectasis, Severe asthma attack, Syncope (fainting), Contagious diseases, Significant fever (101F or 38.3C and higher), Shock (all types), Thyroid storm, Undiagnosed tumours or lumps, Acute intracranial hemorrhage, Recent skull fracture

PALLIATIVE CARE:

PLEASE NOTE THAT PATIENTS DIAGNOSED AS TERMINALLY ILL MAY BE TREATED BY AN RMT. CONSULTATION WITH THE TREATING PHYSICIAN IS ADVISED.

CONTRAINDICATIONS TO MASSAGE THERAPY: (A & B)

A: GENERAL (SYSTEMIC) CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Diabetes Mellitus 1 or 2 with advanced heart or kidney disease or advanced vascular complications (atherosclerosis and/or advanced hypertension)
- Severe and unstable high blood pressure (hypertension)
- Fever
- Sudden onset of severe undiagnosed headache
- Undiagnosed mole(s)
- Undiagnosed lump
- Advanced organ failure
- Pitting edema – heart, kidney, cancer
- Contagious or Infectious Diseases/Conditions
- Chronic active hepatitis
- Severe atherosclerosis/arteriosclerosis
- Pre-eclampsia/eclampsia or toxemia in pregnancy
- Hemophilia
- Hemorrhage or any bleeding internally (not menses)
- Cor Pulmonale
- Endocarditis/pericarditis (infective and non-infective)
- Any Unstable conditions e.g. (post Cerebrovascular accident and post myocardial infarction)
- Aneurisms deemed life threatening, thrombophlebitis or arteritis
- Acute Emphysema
- Acute Pneumonia
- Pulmonary edema/hypertension
- Hypoxemia

- Ectopic pregnancy
- Bronchiectasis
- Lung abscess or tumour
- Heavy intoxication – Drugs and/or Alcohol
- Acute Pelvic Inflammatory Disease
- Coma
- Sepsis
- Ascites
- Severe unexplained internal pain
- Inherited Connective Tissue Disorders i.e. Osteogenesis Imperfecta, Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, Mixed connective tissue disease, Marfans syndrome
- Hyper/hypo glycaemic (stupor/confusion/inappropriate behaviour)
- Osteomyelitis
- Positive occlusion signs
- Recent skull fracture
- High risk pregnancy: can be both general and local depending on the symptoms

Skin

- Inflammatory conditions of the skin (may be local as well)
- Parasitic infections
- Generalized Exfoliative Dermatitis
- Acute Psoriatic arthritis

Bacterial

- (impetigo, staphylococcal, scalded skin syndrome, folliculitis, carbuncles)

Group A streptococcus

- Cellulitis
- Erysipelas
- Scarlet fever
- Bacteremia (blood stream infections)
- Toxic Shock Syndrome
- Necrotizing Fasciitis (sometimes called flesh-eating disease)

Group B streptococcus (GBS)

- Sepsis (blood infection) and meningitis (infection of the fluid and lining surrounding the brain) in newborns

Viral

- Warts (could be local contraindication as well)

B: CONTRAINDICATIONS TO LOCAL AREAS

- Local contagious/infectious conditions
- Acute flare-up of inflammatory arthritides (e.g. Rheumatoid Arthritis, Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, Ankylosing Spondylitis, Reiter's Syndrome)
- Cancer (highly metastatic) – may be an absolute C.I. to the whole body depending on case
- Radiation therapy during treatment
- Phlebitis
- Severe varicose veins
- Deep vein thrombosis
- Thromboangiitis Obliterans (Buerger's disease)
- High Risk Pregnancy
- Acute Neuritis
- Acute Trigeminal Neuralgia
- Meningitis
- Severe Causalgia
- Esophageal varicosities
- Cold applications in acute Raynaud's
- Acute and subacute goiter
- Any undiagnosed internal bleeding
- Severe unexplained internal pain
- Acute Ulcerative Colitis / Crohn's disease – if patient has a fever it becomes a general contraindication.
- Venomous bites or stings
- Hypothermia
- No abdominal massage in hypertension
- Acute Diarrhea

Skin

- Inflammatory conditions of the skin (may be general)
- Cellulites
- Stasis Dermatitis
- Superficial fungal infections (ringworm)
- Viral infections – warts (may be general)
- Acute psoriasis
- Open wounds/sores or acute or infected scar
- Recent burn
- Local irritable skin conditions
- Frostbite
- Open wound, sore, decubitus ulcers
- Skin cancer

CONDITIONS THAT REQUIRE TREATMENT ADAPTATION AND/OR MEDICAL CONSULTATION

These conditions and/or pathologies are not contraindications but require treatment adaptation and/or medical consultation.

This list is for your information and examination candidates will be tested on this information.

- Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
- Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (A.L.S.)
- Asthma
- Chronic Pneumonia
- Hemiplegia
- Cerebral Palsy
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Spinal cord injury
- Parkinson's
- Radiation therapy site for several weeks post-radiation
- Congestive heart failure
- Chronic kidney disease
- Patient is immunosuppressed
- Coma – only with Dr. Referral
- Debilitation
- Diagnosed atherosclerosis
- Drug withdrawal
- Chronic Emphysema
- Hypertension
- Hypotension
- Inflammatory Arthritides
- Major surgery
- Osteoporosis
- Osteomalacia
- Cancer
- Moderate Diabetes Mellitus
- Post-Cerebrovascular accident or myocardial infarction
- Recent head injury
- Chronic Angina
- Severe varicose veins
- Diverticulitis
- Chronic Ulcerative Colitis /Crohn's disease
- Mastitis
- Endometriosis
- Unexplained hematomas
- Acute disk herniation
- Contusion
- Flaccid paralysis or paresis
- Fracture, while casted
- Hernia
- Joint instability
- Chronic pelvic inflammatory disease
- Diarrhea / Constipation
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Gestational Diabetes
- Joint mobilizations in pregnancy
- Seizure disorders
- Inflammatory conditions (acute/chronic)