



Massage FAQ

Image Reborn retreats offer you a chance to get away from it all, relax, and be pampered for a weekend or a full day if that is more convenient for you. Massage therapy is usually offered as an optional part of our program. Some women, however, have never had a massage before, and may have some questions and concerns.

We hope that the following tips and advice will help alleviate any concerns and fears, and allow you to relax and enjoy the benefits of the massages if your current health situation allows:

What should I expect from a massage?

While every massage therapist and masseuse has a different style, there are a few general things that you can expect. The massage will take place in a comfortable, quiet room. You can expect to lie down on your stomach for most of the session while the massage therapist works the muscles in your shoulders, back, neck, arms, and legs.

The massage therapist may move parts of your body to different positions, or ask you to roll onto your side or stomach, so that they can access different muscle groups. The amount of pressure that is used will vary depending on your preference, so be sure to communicate if you feel that the pressure is too light or too strong.

What is the benefit of getting a massage?

One of the biggest benefits of massages is the decrease in stress and increase in relaxation. A recent review of scientific literature found that massage therapy significantly and consistently reduced pain, anxiety, stress, and fatigue in randomized, controlled studies. Reduced stress has been shown to play an important role in improving the immune system, and decreasing the risk of cancer recurrence.

About half of all cancer centers offer massage therapy as a component of their cancer treatment programs, and lymphatic massage is a recognized and specialized treatment for lymphedema.

Do I have to completely undress?

Definitely not! Depending on the setting and the type of massage you are getting, it may be beneficial to take your shirt off to allow easier access to your mussels, however, it's not necessary. Our providers will work with whatever your comfort level is. If you are fully clothed, there would be a different glide and traction with the massage. Know that if you choose to undress, you will be covered with a sheet or blanket at all times except for the area that they are working on.

What should I do during my massage?

The simple answer is: whatever makes you most comfortable. There is no right or wrong way to get a massage. Many people simply like to close their eyes, and relax as much as possible during the massage. Others prefer to talk, whether communicating about specific aspects of the massage or concerns that they have, or whether simply chatting.

Your massage therapist may ask you to change position or she may move part of your body to a new position for you. Otherwise, feel free to move into whatever position you feel is most comfortable for you. If you feel uncomfortable in a certain position, communicate that and find one that does feel comfortable.

Will it hurt?

A lot of people think that massages have to hurt to be effective - this is not true at all. A massage is meant to be a relaxing and pleasant experience. Communicate with your provider if you feel that the massage is too painful, or if there are certain areas of your body that you need extra care or need to be avoided altogether. If you prefer a deeper tissue massage, which may involve a moderate amount of pain, communicate that, as well.

I'm not sure if I'm comfortable with a stranger touching me.

It's perfectly normal to have some hesitation about a complete stranger giving you a massage. Our providers are extremely professional, and they understand the delicate nature of a massage and the hesitancy that many women have toward being touched. If this is an issue for you, communicate it to the retreat facilitator or to the massage staff beforehand, and we will find a way to accommodate your concerns. Massage therapists are happy to work within whatever realm you feel comfortable, and no one expects you to jump into a full body massage if you don't want to. A scalp massage, hand or foot massage, or a light sitting back massage are all great alternatives.

Is it safe for me to have a massage?

This is a very common concern, especially for women who have recently undergone treatment or surgeries, or who are still experiencing pain. In general, a massage is a very safe and beneficial experience, and our massage therapists can adapt to suit your specific situation.

If you have any recent incisions or burns on your skin, it's critical to mention that to your massage therapist so that they can work around sensitive areas. If you have noticed an increased susceptibility to bruising, a potential side effect of chemotherapy or certain medications, it's important to bring that up so that the massage therapist can use a lighter touch. If you have any concerns about specific conditions or recent surgeries, talk with your doctor about any tips they may have.

Our providers are experienced at working with women with breast cancer, and are used to managing those issues, so don't hesitate to bring up any concerns that you have.

Can I talk during my massage?

Yes! In fact, communicating with your massage provider is one of the most important factors in having a good experience. If you feel that the massage is too intense or is not deep enough, if something is hurting, if something is making you feel uncomfortable, or if there is a particular area of your body that you are concerned about, it is important that you bring this up. All of the massage therapists that we work with are experienced professionals, and they want your feedback and comments so that they can give you the best experience possible.

One of the most important aspects of getting a massage is communicating. Our massage therapists are highly experienced, well-trained, and have worked with breast cancer patients before. If you have a concern, don't hesitate to bring it up at any time, and we will work with you to address the issue and do whatever we can to make sure that you can enjoy the opportunity to relax and be pampered.