The differences between types of massage: What’s right for you?

I am a Sports Massage Therapist. Does that mean that I must restrict myself to this ‘type’ of massage? No. As practitioners we are constantly learning and updating our skills and we may take a workshop or further training in something slightly outside of our normal ‘type’ of massage. Each therapist, no matter what type of massage they deliver, uses a whole range of techniques. Therefore there is often a lot of overlap between the different ‘types’ of massage – differences between massage therapists can be as large as the differences between types of treatment.

If you are curious I would recommend that you try a few different massage treatments with a few different therapists and get a feel for how they differ. A good massage therapist should listen to your needs and preferences before any massage and deliver it tailored to you. However that being said, if you know you want a nice relaxing massage and your reason for going is stress related, an invigorating and most likely painful sports massage is probably not a wise choice. Really ask yourself why you are going for a massage and what you want to get out of it.

Receiving a massage can feel like quite a vulnerable experience; you may be feeling exposed and may not be used to the level of physical contact by a stranger. This is completely normal. Don’t let it stop you from being assertive and confident to ask for what you want. Be clear and direct with your needs and receive the best massage for you.

If you are wondering where to start, here’s a rough guide to what to expect from each type of massage out there (all offered at West Norwood Therapies):

**Swedish massage:** “the most commonly used form of classical Western massage, generally performed in the direction of the heart, sometimes with active or passive movement of the joints. It is used especially for relaxation, relief of muscular tension, and improvement of circulation and range of motion.”

**Deep tissue massage:** “**Deep tissue massage** therapy is similar to Swedish **massage**, but the deeper pressure is beneficial in releasing chronic muscle tension. The focus is on the deepest layers of muscle **tissue**, tendons and fascia.”

**Aromatherapy massage:** “bodily application (as by massage) of fragrant essential oils (as from flowers and fruits) for therapeutic purposes”

**Sports massage:** “A massage which addresses specific needs of athletes/sports people. It’s techniques include Swedish massage, cross-fibre friction massage, deep-compression massage, trigger-point therapy. Massage can occur pre or post training/events or just as maintenance, to enhance performance or promote healing.”

**Indian head massage:** “Indian Head massage includes massage of the shoulders, upper arms, neck, scalp, face, ears & rebalancing energy flow, it relieves upper body tension & restores joint mobility; soothes, comforts & gives you a deep sense of peace and calm.

**Pregnancy massage**: “Benefits include easing aches and muscle soreness, promoting relaxation, releasing endorphines and helping to balance hormones, especially helpful to both mother and baby.”

**Tui na massage:** “Tui na is a dynamic and flexible form of massage, routinely practised alongside acupuncture. A variety of massage techniques, gentle body manoeuvres and stretches are combined in an individually tailored, wonderfully relaxing or invigorating treatment.”

Piqued your interest? Massage can help with a whole host of things from muscle imbalances and aches to stress –related discomfort. Why not come down to our open clinic day at Feast this Sunday 2nd December and meet some of the therapists. We would love to answer any questions you may have over some hot mulled apple juice and some baked treats!