

Can therapeutic massage alleviate cancer fatigue?

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In a continuation of clinical trials related to the biological benefits of massage therapy, Emory University researchers are currently studying how massage may help reduce fatigue in breast cancer patients.

Previous research conducted by Mark Hyman Rapaport, MD, Reunette W. Harris professor and chair of Emory's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, has already shown that [massage therapy](#) can boost the immune system and decrease anxiety for people who do not have cancer.

"We decided to look at massage therapy for cancer fatigue because cancer-related fatigue is one of the most prevalent and debilitating symptoms experienced by people with cancer," explains Rapaport, principle investigator for this study and a member of Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University. "Many studies investigating massage for patients with cancer have been focused on depression, anxiety or pain."

The Emory cancer fatigue study is a collaboration between the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and the Winship Cancer Institute of Emory. Mylin Torres, MD, associate professor in Emory's Department of Radiation Oncology, serves as a co-investigator. Torres specializes in the treatment of breast cancer as a physician-scientist with Winship's Glenn Family Breast Center. She sees her patients at Winship Cancer Institute on the Emory campus.

"We already know that frequent massage can enhance the immune

system and reduce anxiety, and it has been reported that massage therapy can stimulate energy, and reduce symptoms such as nausea and pain," says Torres. "We believe that there are many positive effects to be gained by therapeutic massage and we hope to prove that, among other biological advantages, massage may diminish the incapacitation that [cancer](#)-related fatigue can cause for our patients."

Provided by Emory University

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