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I want to be a massage therapist. What will my salary be?

[Brenda Bouw](#)

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Job: Massage therapist

The role: Massage therapists use a range of techniques to manipulate the soft tissues and joints of the body. The goal is to maintain and improve how a body functions, and to relieve pain. [Andrew Lewarne](#) [<http://www.thebodywise.com/index-57529.html>], a registered massage therapist and executive director of the [Registered Massage Therapists' Association of Ontario](#) [<http://www.rmtao.com/>], says the job starts with assessing patients and developing short and long-term treatment plans for them. Many massage therapists are self-employed, so the job can also include bookkeeping and even laundering the sheets and towels used on the practice table.

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Salary: Mr. Lewarne says most full-time massage therapists earn about \$60,000 to \$72,000, based on a recent membership survey. The money can increase to well over \$100,000 for those who own and operate a successful massage therapy clinic.

Education: Either a three-year advanced diploma from a community college, such as Humber or Centennial in Ontario, or a certificate of completion from a private career college, which is an 18-month to two-year intensive program. In provinces where the profession is regulated, which include B.C., Ontario, New Brunswick and Newfoundland, graduates are also required to pass a provincial registration exam, Mr. Lewarne says.

By the numbers: There are about 26,000 massage therapists in Canada, according to the 2011 National Household Survey. About 80 per cent are women, and 20 per cent men. About two-thirds of all massage therapists are self-employed, while the rest are employees of clinics or organizations such as professional

sports teams.

Job prospects: “Very good,” Mr. Lewarne says. More Canadians are seeking massage therapy treatment to help improve and maintain their health as they age and as their lives become more stressful. They also rely on massage therapists to treat sports injuries.

Challenges: Massage therapists help others with their aches and pains, but the work is also rough on the therapists’ own bodies. “The physical piece is probably the single largest challenge,” Mr. Lewarne says. “There are also the challenges of running your own business and being self-employed, such as marketing, administration and patient interaction.”

Why they do it: “Most of the time, it’s because massage therapists like to look after folks,” Mr. Lewarne says. They also want to work in the health care field. Massage therapists enjoy the chance to develop long-term relationships with their patients, helping them to improve their health and well-being.

Misconceptions: Mr. Lewarne believes the biggest misconception is that massage therapists aren’t registered health professionals. Some people also confuse massage therapy clinics with massage parlours, which have a very different, unsavoury connotation. For registered massage therapists, it’s exasperating. “Quite frankly, how many times do we have to go through that?”

Give us the scoop: Are you a massage therapist? Write a note in the comments area of this story or e-mail your comment to careerquestion@globeandmail.com [<mailto:careerquestion@globeandmail.com>] and let us know what you would tell others who are interested in the profession.

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