

**NAT Pro Series:**

# **Oncology Massage**

Course Notes

**Maureen Abson**

## **Oncology Massage – background and research**

For many years massage was seen as a contraindication to cancer, with the exception of end-stage cancer where massage has been an important part of hospice and end of life care.

The fear was that massage could spread cancer. The argument went along the lines of “Cancer spreads through the lymphatic system, massage speeds up the lymphatic system – therefore massage spreads cancer”

Both statements are simplistic and there was no research available to say if this assumption was correct or not.



The result was that many schools taught that having cancer, or a history of cancer, meant that someone could not receive massage.

More recently the research has been carried out and shows that carefully given massage can be safe.

The leading body here in the UK, Cancer Research UK says; “some people worry that having a massage when you have cancer may make the cancer cells travel to other parts of the body. No research has proved this to be true”.

<http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cancer-in-general/treatment/complementary-alternative-therapies/individual-therapies/massage>

Please refer to page 62 of the book “Healing Massage”, by Maureen Abson, for other supporting research.

Page 63 also details some of the benefits of massage during and after cancer treatment, please also read these.

**Important note:**

More controversially you may come across websites and people who claim that massage can cure cancer. This is not the stance taken on this course and there is little empirical evidence to support this view.

On this course we are approaching this subject with massage as a complimentary, not alternative, therapy. It is completely the decision of the client, in discussion with their specialists, which courses of treatment they do or do not take for their cancer and we should not be involved in trying to influence that decision.

What we can do is to provide high quality, safe massage for the person going through their cancer journey whatever treatment route they decide to take or not – the healing touch we offer is powerful as a therapy to assist them through what will be a challenging time of life.



## **What cancer is and how it spreads**

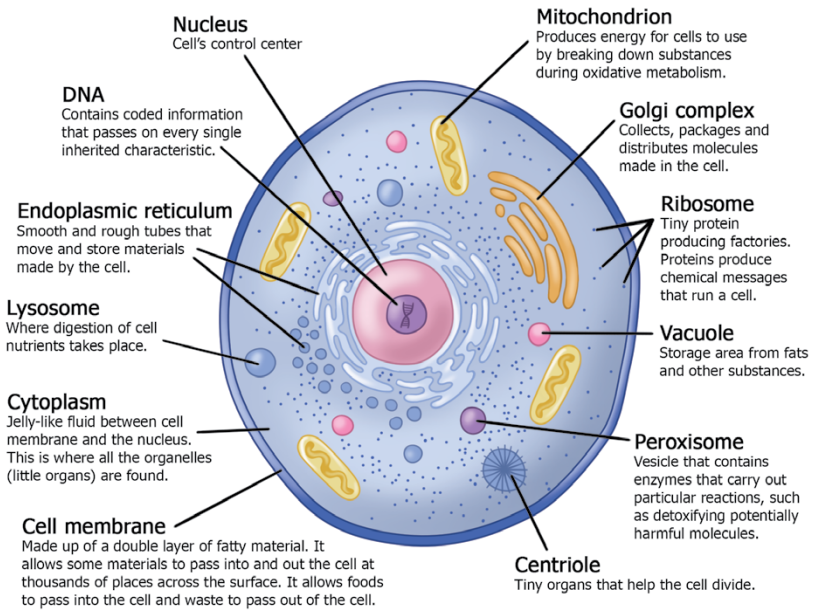
Our bodies are made up of over 100,000,000,000,000 cells.

These cells are highly specialist and vary depending on the role of that cell. Organs, bones, muscles, skin, blood are made of different cells. An eye cell will always be an eye cell and will never become a heart cell, a blood cell will never become a skin cell – the human body is amazing in its ability to grow, repair and replace specialist cells exactly where they are meant to be.

At the heart of each cell is the nucleus.

Within the nucleus are thousands of genes made from DNA.

## Cell Diagram





Our DNA carries our hereditary information and DNA has the ability to duplicate itself.

When a cell divides to replicate itself each cell has an exact copy of the DNA from the original cell. When our cells get worn out, old or damaged, the amazing human body creates new ones.

The blood is perhaps the simplest and best example of this as every single day our body makes millions of new blood cells and flushes out the old – as human beings we are in a constant state of physical renewal. DNA

**DNA Double Helix**



DNA is what defines us. My DNA defines me as an Anglo-Irish, dark haired, blue eyed woman. Many of these features I will have inherited from my parents, their parents and generations down the line. My half Celt, half Viking roots will have had an impact on how I grew, how I will age, which diseases I am more likely to get and which I am less likely to get.

Note that I say more or less likely, DNA is only part of the picture. That is the nature part, then there is the nurture. My upbringing, my education, my life choices and physical & emotional background and environment also impact on my physicality.

I grew up with good nutrition, that helped me develop strong bones and teeth as a child. Amongst other things hormones then influence my bone density and how strong they remain. I then make life choices that nutritionally make a difference. So my bone strength is not just DNA, it was and is effected by my development, nutrition and life choices.