

## Thoracic Outlet Syndrome And Massage Therapy

In my San Antonio Massage Therapy and Bodywork practice I often treat pain from various syndromes including Thoracic Outlet Syndrome. Like many painful conditions Thoracic Outlet Syndrome responds very well to massage therapy and bodywork.

What is Thoracic Outlet Syndrome?

Though many people with this condition think they may have just "slept wrong" and awakened with a numb hand, Thoracic Outlet Syndrome is the name given to a group of painful nerve impingement conditions in which the nerve bundle to the arm (brachial plexus) is placed under abnormal pressure by the muscles in the front of the neck (scalenes), by the collar bone and first rib, or the pectoralis minor muscle in the upper chest/arm-pit area. The most common symptoms of Thoracic Outlet Syndrome are pain and numbness in the arm and hand of the affected side; however, those who suffer from this condition may have only pain or only numbness. In some cases Thoracic Outlet Syndrome may also encompass a dangerous restriction of blood flow. Most of the time the symptoms are on one side, but may affect both sides in some cases.

What is the cause of Thoracic Outlet Syndrome?

There are a number of causes for Thoracic Outlet Syndrome including whiplash injuries from motor vehicle accidents and sports injuries. Postural issues, especially a forward head posture like that maintained by office workers and computer users, can also trigger the onset of this syndrome. Thoracic Outlet Syndrome may also be the result of overstretching the muscles in the thoracic outlet area during exercise, or by impact injuries to the shoulder or upper chest area. Additionally, though it is rare, a "cervical rib" may be the blame for this condition.

Massage Therapy and Bodywork for Thoracic Outlet Syndrome

There are many ways that massage therapy and bodywork can be used to treat Thoracic Outlet Syndrome. The massage therapist will employ a number of techniques to relieve the condition. For example, the massage therapist may use Neuromuscular Therapy or Trigger Point Therapy to eliminate myofascial trigger points in the scalene muscles and other muscle of the front of the neck. The massage therapist could also use Myofascial Release techniques or Deep Tissue Massage techniques to release fascial adhesions in the area of the thoracic outlet and surrounding tissues while also using Muscle Energy Techniques to gently lengthen the scalene muscles and other affected neck, chest, and shoulder muscles. Thoracic Outlet Syndrome also responds well to positional release therapies such as Ortho-Bionomy which work with the body's nervous system to release muscles and improve joint movement in the area. Ortho-Bionomy is particularly effective when the nerves are being compressed by the clavicle (collar bone) and first rib. In addition to working on the scalene muscles and pectoralis minor muscle it may be necessary to provide therapy for other muscles adjacent to, or opposing the scalenes or pectoralis minor to improve muscular balance. Treatment for postural issues may also be needed. Comprehensive treatment with massage and bodywork, in conjunction with a home program of stretching and exercise, usually helps to completely resolve Thoracic Outlet Syndrome.

Other Treatments for Thoracic Outlet Syndrome

While massage therapy and bodywork are an excellent treatment for Thoracic Outlet Syndrome there are other treatments you should discuss with your physician:

- 1) Muscle Relaxer medications;
- 2) Anti-inflammatory medications;
- 3) Surgery

Other Names for Thoracic Outlet Syndrome

- 1) Anterior Scalene Syndrome;
- 2) Costoclavicular Syndrome;
- 3) Pectoralis Minor Syndrome;

#### 4) Thoracic Inlet Syndrome

The information in this article has been provided for information purposes only. It is not meant to provide a medical diagnosis, only a licensed physician may diagnose Thoracic Outlet Syndrome. If you feel that you have the symptoms of Thoracic Outlet Syndrome please see your physician for a proper diagnosis and plan of treatment which may include massage therapy and bodywork. There are a number of more serious conditions that resemble Thoracic Outlet Syndrome that could require immediate medical intervention.

#### About the Author

Ben Crabtree is a Licensed Massage Therapist, and Certified Neuromuscular Therapist in San Antonio, Texas. His practice is dedicated to relieving pain through the use of several massage and bodywork [techniques](#). See his site [MassageByBen.com](http://MassageByBen.com) or [his blog](#).

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