

health*brief*

Imagine a soothing hot stone massage...courtesy of your employee health plan.

It's true. Many registered massage therapies are covered under major employee health plans. Depending on your plan, you may be covered for either a dollar amount or a certain number of treatments. With the calendar year drawing to a close, why not take advantage?

"With the lives we lead today, massage therapy is a great stress reliever," says Melissa Hampson of Spa Ahava in Saskatoon. "It can relieve pain, tension and aches. It has excellent therapeutic benefits if you've had an injury, say from a car accident or lifting a heavy load, or if you're an athlete."

The hot stone massage is one of many different types of massage available. A massage therapist strategically places and massages heated basalt lava stones on your body, letting the heat transfer to your muscles, relaxing and soothing them. Other types of massage include aromatherapy, Swedish (a deep tissue therapeutic massage) and pregnancy massages.

In each case, a registered massage therapist performs the treatment. Registered is the key word here. In order to qualify for coverage, the treatment must be performed by a registered massage therapist – their certification number is stamped on your receipt. Without that, your health plan won't reimburse you.

Costs vary from \$25 to \$65 for a 30-minute or 90-minute massage therapy session, and \$40 to \$80 for a 30-minute or 90-minute hot stone massage.

Most sessions begin with a consultation. It's important to tell the massage therapist what area you'd like worked on and what you expect, even during the treatment. Most registered therapists will send you home with stretching exercises and suggest maintenance visits to help you keep your muscles relaxed. Consider the visits an investment in your own good health...courtesy of your health plan.