

Spa 101...Swedish or Shiatsu?

For most of us, the sheer number of services and exotic names given to spa treatments can be daunting. Did you know there are over 30 different types of massage practiced at spas and resorts in South Florida? But resist the urge to have that grapefruit and poppy seed scrub with the raspberry caviar oil facial. Concentrate on your needs. Do you need to relax? Suffering from sore muscles? Neck in knots? Make sure to consult a therapist on what treatments are best for your needs.

Two of the most common types of massage at most spas are Swedish and Shiatsu. [Swedish massage](#) is most often offered for those looking to relax or stimulate circulation. A Swedish gentleman, Per Henrik Ling, created the technique however in Sweden it's known as a "classic" massage. The technique has five basic strokes, and usually starts with effleurage (sliding or gliding), next is petrissage (kneading), tapotement (rhythmic tapping) and your Swedish massage ends with friction (cross fiber) and vibration/shaking. One of the great benefits of Swedish massage is that it increases the oxygen flow in the blood and releases toxins from the muscles. In addition it shortens recovery time from muscle strain by flushing the tissues of lactic acid, uric acid, and other metabolic waste. The best part is that it increases circulation without increasing heart load.

Shiatsu literally means finger pressure. ("shi" meaning finger and "atsu" meaning pressure.) It is most often offered to alleviate stress, PMS, low energy and immune system issues. Shiatsu is an eastern oriental therapy that uses pressure applied with thumbs, fingers and palms to the same energy meridians (the invisible channels through which qi or energy circulates throughout the body) as acupuncture and incorporates stretching. You may also be familiar with the foot shiatsu where the therapist literally walks on your back. The technique uses rolling, brushing, vibrating, grasping motions to concentrate on your energy, however it is not suggested for people with a history of blood clots, varicose veins, or bruises, cuts, burns, or external swelling of any kind. While most people experience an immediate sense of relaxation after Shiatsu treatments, some suffer from headache or flu like symptoms anywhere from a few hours to a day after the treatment due to the release of excessive toxins in your bloodstream. You'll feel better eventually, but this is one of those services that can be attributed to the saying, beauty is pain.

So who has the best Swedish and Shiatsu in town? Stay tuned...

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