

Clinical Practice Guideline: Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapy™

Date of Implementation: July 13, 2006

Product: Specialty

GUIDELINES

American Specialty Health – Specialty (ASH) considers Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapy™ unproven due to insufficient evidence of clinical effectiveness over other forms of therapeutic massage. The risks to both the therapist and the patient/client from the delivery of Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapy™ outweigh the benefits, thus determining the use of Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapy™ as unsafe with a risk of direct harm. For more information, see the *Techniques and Procedures Not Widely Supported as Evidence Based (CPG 133 – S)* clinical practice guideline.

The practitioner's use of their body weight to massage by use of the feet while balancing on top of the client has the potential to result in the application of excessive weight and force to the client. In addition, there is a risk of direct harm due to the Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapy practitioner falling off of the table especially if a portable table is used.

Patients must be informed verbally and in writing of the nature of any procedure or treatment technique that is considered experimental/investigational or unproven, poses a significant health and safety risk, and/or is scientifically implausible. If the patient decides to receive such services, they must sign a *Member Billing Acknowledgment Form* (for Medicare use *Advance Beneficiary Notice of Non-Coverage form*) indicating they understand they are assuming financial responsibility for any service-related fees. Further, the patient must sign an attestation indicating that they understand what is known and unknown about, and the possible risks associated with such techniques prior to receiving these services. All procedures, including those considered here, must be documented in the medical record. Finally, prior to using experimental/investigational or unproven procedures, those that pose a significant health and safety risk, and/or those considered scientifically implausible, it is incumbent on the practitioner to confirm that their professional liability insurance covers the use of these techniques or procedures in the event of an adverse outcome.

DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND

Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapy™ is a Swedish style of effleurage massage (long, connecting strokes) using only the therapist's feet to perform the massage. The massage therapist uses either ceiling-mounted support bars or a portable structure attached to the massage table with overhead support bars for balance, support, and leverage while applying "deep compression effleurage" using body weight as the therapist's feet are "gliding over

the body” of the client. The feet are also used for stretching and range of motion activities for the client. This type of massage is said to allow for deeper pressure than that used with usual manual deep tissue massage techniques. It is also purported that Ashiatsu bar massage reduces overuse injuries to the upper body for massage therapists.

Therapeutic Massage providers are required to complete training in this technique and become a Certified Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapist™ before any supporting structure (Ashiatsu Portable System) can be purchased from the developer and manufacturer of this specialized massage equipment. Developers of this technique offer a 25-hour continuing education certification course. Advanced Ashiatsu Oriental Bar massage practitioners are also taught how to administer Swedish effleurage strokes with their feet while using an overhead bar system; one-footed and two-footed sequences; contraindications; proper body mechanics for gravity-assisted massage; and foot hygiene. Equipment for Ashiatsu bar massage may be available from other sources without training requirements.

EVIDENCE REVIEW

Based on the review conducted, ASH has determined this procedure to be unsafe with risk of direct harm.

No relevant studies for Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapy™ were found to establish that benefits outweigh the known risks of direct harm of using this technique.

References

Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapy. Retrieved August 4, 2025 from <http://deepfeet.com/>

Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapy. Barefoot Trainer’s Ashiatsu. Retrieved July 24, 2025, from <https://www.ashiatsutraining.com/ashiatsu-oriental-bar-therapy>