



The NCCAOM[®] Certification in Asian Bodywork Therapy

About Asian Bodywork Therapy

- Asian Bodywork Therapy (ABT) is the treatment of the human body/mind/spirit, including the electromagnetic or energetic field, which surrounds, infuses and brings that body to life, by pressure and/or manipulation. ¹
- ABT is based on Chinese medical principles for assessing and evaluating the energetic system. It uses traditional Asian techniques and treatment strategies to primarily affect and balance the energetic system for the purpose of treating the human body, emotions, mind, energy field and spirit for the promotion, maintenance and restoration of health. ¹
- ABT has existed at least as long as – and perhaps longer than – acupuncture and herbal medicine; it has come to be a recognized form of traditional Chinese medicine only recently. In 1996, the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) developed the first certification program in Asian Bodywork Therapy. ²

Asian Bodywork Therapy Forms

Under the Asian Bodywork Therapy umbrella, there are many modalities that are specific and distinct entities, including, but not limited to:

- **Acupressure** – A system of balancing the body's energy by applying pressure to specific acupoints to release tension and increase circulation. The many hands-on methods of stimulating the acupressure points can strengthen weaknesses, relieve common ailments, prevent health disorders and restore the body's vital life force.
- **Amma** – A specialized form of skilled (somatic) touch therapy that combines deep tissue bodywork with the application of pressure, friction and touch to specific acupoints, superficial primary and tendino-muscle energy channels, muscles, ligaments and joints. The techniques are aimed to remove blockages and free the flow of Qi (energy) in the body.
- **AMMA Therapy[®]** – A highly-refined and complex system of bodywork therapy utilizing techniques and treatment strategies combining the use of traditional Chinese medical principles for assessing and evaluating general imbalances in the energetic system and a Western approach to organ dysfunctions. The treatment includes the use of dietary therapy, herbs, nutritional supplements and the external application of herbal preparations.

- **Chi Nei Tsang** – This is an entire system of Chinese deep healing that makes use of the energy flow of the five major systems in the body: vascular, lymphatic, nervous, tendon/muscle and acupuncture meridians. With this practice, one is able to increase the energy flow to specific organs through massaging a series of points in the navel area.
- **Five Element Shiatsu** – This method identifies a pattern of disharmony through use of the four examinations and to harmonize that pattern with an appropriate treatment plan. Radial pulse, palpation of the back and/or abdomen and a detailed verbal history serve to confirm the assessment.
- **Integrative Eclectic Shiatsu** – This method utilizes Japanese Shiatsu techniques, traditional Chinese Medical theory and Western methods of soft tissue manipulation. Dietary and herbal methods are also included to create a comprehensive integrated treatment method.
- **Shiatsu** – Shiatsu means finger pressure and although Shiatsu is primarily pressure, usually applied with the thumbs, along the meridian lines, extensive soft tissue manipulation and both active and passive exercise and stretching may be part of the treatments.
- **Jin Shin Do® Bodymind Acupressure™** – This technique combines gentle yet deep finger pressure on acupoints with simple body focusing techniques, to help release physical and emotional tension. It promotes a pleasurable trance state during which the recipient can get in touch with the body and access feelings or emotions related to the physical condition.
- **Macrobiotic Shiatsu** – This method supports a natural lifestyle and heightened instincts for improving health. Treatment involves non-invasive touch and pressure using hand and barefoot techniques and stretches to facilitate the flow of Qi (energy) and to strengthen the body-mind.
- **Medical Qigong** – This process is based on meridian and point theory that makes use of: breath training, psychosomatic exercises, meditation and guided visualization that direct the practitioners to create a place of health and balance in their clients.
- **Shiatsu Anma Therapy** – This method is based on the energetic system of Traditional Chinese Medicine in long form and contemporary pressure therapy which is based on neuro-musculo-skeletal system in short form.
- **Traditional Thai Bodywork (Nuad Bo 'Rarn)** – This utilizes hand techniques and an unique approach to passive movement and stretching in order to open up the veins or energy passages and release chronic tension from the body.
- **Tuina** – A method of Chinese Bodywork characterized by the smooth gliding or rolling movements of the hands and arms. These techniques are used to treat a wide variety of musculoskeletal and internal organ disorders by opening stagnant meridian channels and encouraging the flow of Qi (energy) into deficient areas.
- **Zen Shiatsu** – This technique focuses on the use of meridian lines rather than on specific points. This form does not adhere to fixed sequence or set of methods that are applied to all. It utilizes appropriate methods for the unique pattern of each individual.

Benefits and Use of Asian Bodywork Therapy

What are some of the ways that ABT can benefit me?

The American Organization for Bodywork Therapies of Asia (AOBTA®) recognizes ABT is useful for the following ailments including:

Stress-Related Disorders	Seasonal affective disorders (SAD)
Asthma	TMJ
Musculo-skeletal conditions (neck, shoulder, back and hip/leg pain)	Menstrual dysfunction and peri-menopausal life-cycle changes
Allergies	Depression/ Anxiety
Headaches/ Migraines	Gastrointestinal problems (digestion, IBS, constipation)
Repetitive-motion stress & injury (carpal tunnel syndrome, etc.)	

The Shiatsu Therapy Association of Canada recognizes Shiatsu is effective in the management of many acute and chronic conditions from above and including these below:

Muscle tension and spasm	Sports Injuries
Insomnia	Sciatica
Chronic fatigue syndrome	Whiplash
Fibromyalgia	Thoracic outlet syndrome
Arthritis	

What is the difference between ABT and massage?

According to the United States Department of Education, massage therapy/therapeutic massage is different from Asian Bodywork Therapy. Massage therapy is defined as a way to provide relief and improved health and well-being through the application of manual techniques for manipulating skin, muscles and connective tissues. ABT is defined as a way to provide relief and improved health and well-being based on Chinese medical principles through one or more of the traditional bodywork therapies of Asia.³

How many people are receiving ABT treatments?

Based on a national consumer research by the Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals, a full 33.6 million American adults aged 21 or older received at least one bodywork session in 2006, up nearly 9 million from the 2004 level. That represents growth from 12 percent in 2004 to 16 percent in 2006.⁴

According to an annual comprehensive report of Americans' health, one in four U.S. adults say they suffered a day-long bout of pain in the past month, and one in ten say the pain lasted a year or more. Low back pain is among the most common complaints, along with migraine or severe headache, and joint pain, aching or stiffness. In addition, 15 percent of adults experienced migraine or severe headache in the past 3 months. Adults ages 18-44 were almost three times affected by these headaches.⁵

Identifying a Qualified Asian Bodywork Therapist

How do I find a qualified ABT therapist?

To choose an ABT therapist, the credentials to look for include:

- Diplomat of Asian Bodywork Therapy or Dipl. ABT (NCCAOM)[™]
- State or local license, certification/registration, as required
- Find a Diplomat of ABT by going to the [NCCAOM[®] Find a Practitioner](http://www.nccaom.org) at www.nccaom.org

What training does an NCCAOM Diplomat of ABT have?

Diplomates of ABT go through extensive training before they can achieve national certification. This training includes hundreds of hours of comprehensive education as well as additional specific training in ABT techniques. They must complete 500 hours of basic Asian bodywork therapy education from formal full-time schools, formal programs and courses in order to sit for the NCCAOM ABT Certification Examination. The required 500 hour education includes practical and theoretical training of which 160 hours relate specifically to ABT techniques. The remaining theoretical hours that are not ABT-specific consist of Allopathic Anatomy, Physiology, Oriental Medical Theory, First-Aid, CPR and Ethics. In addition, Diplomates of ABT must demonstrate competency in the area of clinical education (observation, internship or treatment hours). Certified (and licensed) Asian bodywork therapists are also trained in standard medical history gathering, safety, and ethics, and recognition of when to refer patients to other healthcare professionals or consult with other medical practitioners.

NCCAOM and its Diplomates

The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) is widely accepted as the most influential leader in the field of acupuncture and Oriental medicine. There are currently over 17,000 active NCCAOM Diplomates (NCCAOM certificate holders) practicing under an NCCAOM certification.

The NCCAOM, established in 1982, is a non-profit organization whose mission is *to establish, assess, and promote recognized standards of competence and safety in acupuncture and Oriental medicine for the protection and benefit of the public*. NCCAOM certification programs are accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). NCCA's standards exceed the requirements set forth by the American Psychological Association and the United States Employment Opportunity Commission. As a requirement of accreditation the NCCAOM must submit annual reports to NCCA and must undergo a full reaccreditation every five years for each of its NCCA accredited programs. Additional information is available at <http://www.credentialingexcellence.org/>.



The following NCCAOM certifications carry the above NCCA accreditation seal:

- Diplomat of Acupuncture (NCCAOM)[™]
- Diplomat of Chinese Herbology (NCCAOM)[™]
- Diplomat of Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM)[™]
- Diplomat of Asian Bodywork Therapy (NCCAOM)[™]

Contact Information

NCCAOM
2025 M Street NW, Suite 800
Washington DC, 20036
(888) 381-1140 (phone)
(202) 381-1141 (fax)
Email: info@nccaom.org

References

1. American Organization for Bodywork Therapy of Asia (AOBTA); <http://www.aobta.org/about-forms.html>; accessed April 8, 2009.
2. Massage and Bodywork, Asian Bodywork Therapy, *Part I - Amma, Shiatsu & Jin Shin Jyutsu*; October 2004.
3. *Classification of Instructional Programs: 2000 Edition*; April 2002, National Center for Education Statistics, Department of Education.
4. *Massage Profession Metrics*, Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals (ABMP); <http://www.massagetherapy.com>; accessed April 8, 2009.
5. *New Report Finds Pain Affects Millions of Americans*; November 2006; National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.