



Palpation

The Essential Building Block

presented by Andrew Biel, LMP

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- 1) What is palpation?
 - 2) Why is it essential?
 - 3) The how and what
 - 4) Other considerations
- 2

A math story

8×7 $2 + 2$ 4
 $ab/-c^2$ $d^2 + \sqrt{(ab)}$
 $6-5$ 1
 $e^2 - \sqrt{(c+b)}$ 54

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So just as this equation...

$$d^2 + \sqrt{(ab)} = a - c^2$$

$$e^2 - \sqrt{(c+b)}$$

is built on this basic math...

$$2 + 2 = 4$$

$$6 - 5 = 1$$

$$8 \times 7 = 54$$

4

these modalities...

Lymphatic Drainage	Pilates	Thai	Swedish
Acupuncture	Deep Tissue	Athletic Training	Chiropractic
	Tui na	NMT	Shiatsu
	Osteopathy	Trager	Myofascial Reflexology
	Physical Therapy	Rolfing	Feldenkrais
Craniosacral		Stone massage	

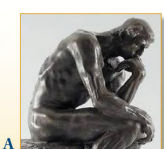
and many more

are built on


Palpation

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Question: Where does bodywork happen?



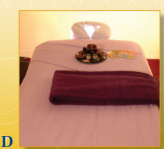
A



B



C



D

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- 1) What is palpation?
- 2) Why is it essential?
- 3) The how and what
- 4) Other considerations

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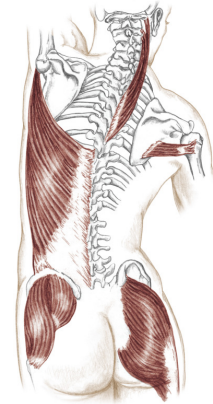
“to examine or explore by touching (an organ or area of the body), usually as a diagnostic aid.”

Three aspects of palpation

- 1) locating a structure
- 2) becoming aware of its characteristics
- 3) assessing a structure's quality or condition so you can determine how to treat it

Two poetic aspects of palpation

- 1) visualization
- 2) intention



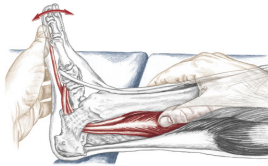
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Students, Instructors & Practitioners

Instructors: Are there any muscles or regions of the body where your palpation skills could improve?

Students: Are there any types of tissue or areas of the body you feel intimidated by?

Practitioners: What are the areas of the body where you feel confident and experienced palpating? What are the areas that you feel could improve?



Note To All
No shame in not knowing

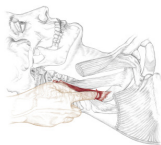
Locating the flexors of the ankle and toes

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- 1) What is palpation?
- 2) Why is palpation essential for bodyworkers?
- 3) The how and what
- 4) Other considerations

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vague	or	specific
generalized	or	detailed
off target	or	on target
foggy	or	clear intention



Strumming across the middle scalene



Scooping the fingers around the medial border

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No guessing



confidence



effectiveness



precision

Multiple experiences and comparisons

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Healthy tissue or pathological tissue

Is it referred pain (trigger point) or are you compressing a nerve?

Is it a bone spur or a normal bony landmark?

Is it a suspicious lump or a normal lymph node?



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The final reason that palpatory anatomy skills are essential...



As a wilderness guide, this would be your territory...
(well, hopefully not all of it)

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As a bodyworker...

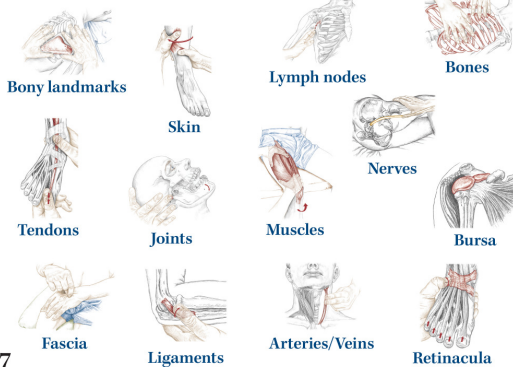


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- 1) What is palpation?
- 2) Why is it essential?
- 3) The how and what of palpation
- 4) Other considerations

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What could you palpate?



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Three principles of palpation

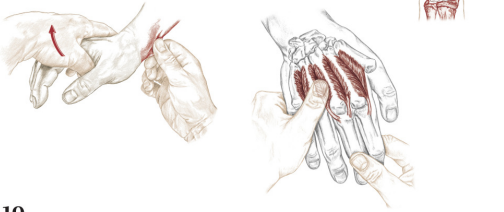
- 1) Move slowly. Haste only interferes with sensation.
- 2) Avoid using excessive pressure. Less is truly more.
- 3) Focus your awareness on what it is you are feeling.
In other words, be present.



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A few palpation hints

- 1) Making contact (your own hand)
- responsive and sensitive hands
 - lay one hand on the other
 - close your eyes

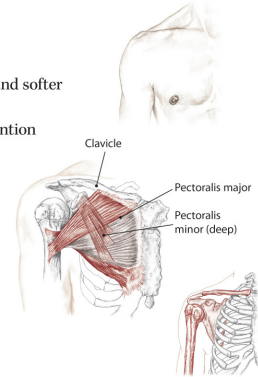


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A few palpation hints

- 2) Less is more & Layer-by-layer
- invite the tissues into your hands
 - the deeper you move, the slower and softer your touch
 - ultimately, a question of your intention

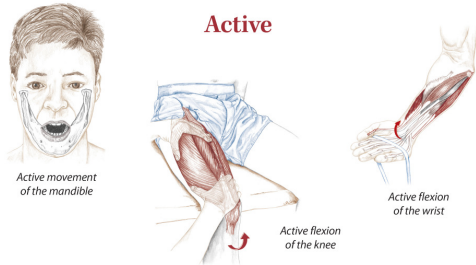
- 1st level: clothing
 2nd: skin
 3rd: adipose and fascia
 4th: pectoralis major
 5th: pectoralis minor
 6th: ribs



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A few palpation hints

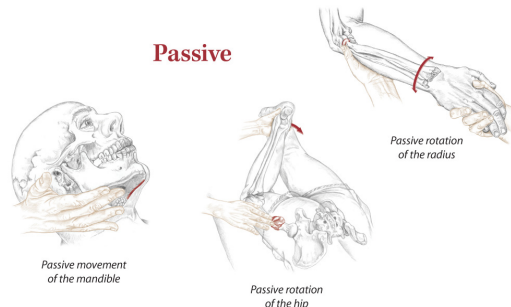
- 3a) Movement as a palpation tool - active, passive and resisted
- verify locations
 - assess changes occurring in the tissue



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A few palpation hints

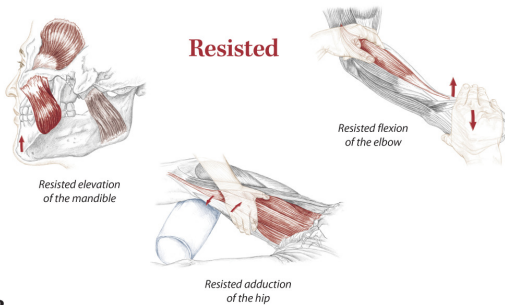
- 3b) Movement as a palpation tool - active, passive and resisted



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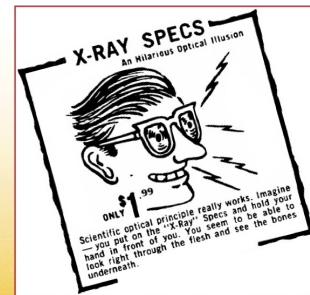
A few palpation hints

- 3c) Movement as a palpation tool - active, passive and resisted



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X-Ray Hands

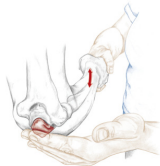


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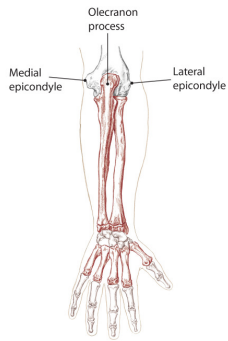
A few palpation hints

4) Bones & bony landmarks

- reliable
- solid feel (they're bone, after all)
- helpful to locate muscles, tendons and ligaments



Isolating the olecranon process



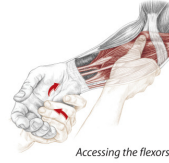
Posterior view of right forearm and hand

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A few palpation hints

5) Muscles & tendons

- a muscle has a striated texture
- a muscle's fiber direction can help to determine which muscle you'll palpate
- a muscle can be in contracted or relaxed state



Accessing the flexors



Pronator teres



Flexors of the wrist and fingers

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A few palpation hints

6) Discerning tendons from ligaments

- tendons connect muscles to bone
- ligaments connect bone to bone

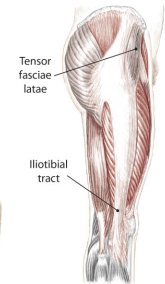


Locating the lateral c. ligament



Lateral c. ligament

Anterior view of the right knee



Tensor fasciae latae

Iliotibial tract

Lateral view of right thigh

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- 1) What is palpation?
- 2) Why is it essential?
- 3) The how and what
- 4) Other considerations about palpation

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Palpation & other fields of study



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What can you do to improve your skills now?

- create a palpatory journal
- take a cadaver class
- be a TA for a local class
- find a colleague to practice with



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Palpate a variety of people and species



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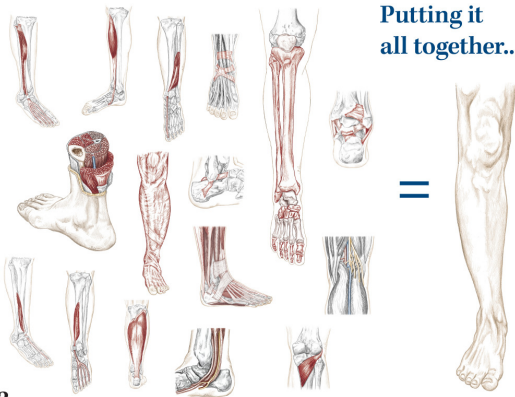
The role of palpation



Hopefully, this is a sign that you'll never see

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Putting it all together...



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- 1) What is palpation?
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- 3) How and what?
- 4) Other considerations

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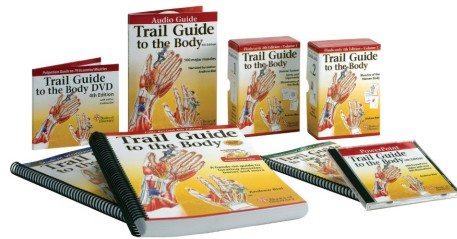
A final story



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