

**Table 1: Systematic reviews of reflexology for cancer**

Source: Lorenc A, CAM-Cancer Consortium. [Reflexology](#). [online document]. October 2023.

Study year	Design and methods	Included studies and participants	Included interventions and outcomes	Main results/Conclusions	Comments
Tian 2023	Type of review: Systematic Search strategy: Searched 8 databases, 1 register and grey literature (google/hand searching). From inception to June 2021. No limits or restriction. Quality assessment: CASP RCT checklist. Measure of treatment effect: Not mentioned. Data synthesis: Meta-analysis performed only for anxiety and vs placebo.	Studies: 15 RCTs  Participants: 1356 adults with cancer	Intervention: Foot, hand or ear reflexology. Control: Any. Concurrent treatment: Standalone or multimodal if reflexology evaluated separately.  Outcome measures: Mental health (anxiety, stress, depression, QoL)	Results for outcome measures: Stress: no significant difference (2 studies) Anxiety: meta-analysis (2 studies) found no difference compared to placebo. Other results are mixed and conflicting. Depression: Mixed and conflicting results. Anxiety + depression: no significant difference (2 studies). QoL: Mixed and conflicting results. Results quality assessment: CASP quality scores ranged from 23% to 54% - most studies had high risk of bias. Conclusions: Reflexology more likely to have an effect on QoL than anxiety or depression but low to very low GRADE certainty of evidence means an unequivocal recommendation supporting reflexology cannot be made.	Review limitations: Only English language studies included. Meta-analysis only conducted for one outcome (due to heterogeneity). Did not assess the potential impact of risk of bias in individual studies on the results of the meta-analysis. Publication bias may be present.
Wanchai 2020	Type of review: Systematic Search strategy: dates, databases, restrictions: Searched 5 databases from inception to June 2019, plus ref lists. No limits or restrictions. Quality assessment: Cochrane RoB tool. Measure of treatment effect: None. Data synthesis: Narrative.	Studies: 6 studies (4 RCTs, 2 quasi-experimental)  Participants: ranged from 60 to 385 (not added). Breast cancer.	Intervention: Reflexology. In one study delivered by caregivers. Control: Any. Concurrent treatment: Not mentioned.  Outcome measures: Symptoms or side effects of cancer treatment.	Results for outcome measures: QoL: Mixed and contradictory results (2 studies significant effects; 2 studies not) Depression and anxiety: no significant difference (2 studies). Fatigue, nausea and vomiting: reduced fatigue (2 studies) Peripheral neuropathy: no significant difference (one study) Results quality assessment: Four studies had low risk of bias, two unclear. Conclusions: Enough high-level evidence has not been reported to confirm the effectiveness of reflexology on breast cancer symptom management.	Review limitations: Review was not registered and no mention of a protocol. Did not search very many databases or grey lit. Didn't mention or consider meta-analysis. Did not synthesise risk of bias results. Did not report limitations of their review. Excluded studies not listed. No mention of publication bias.
Lee 2015	Type of review: Systematic Search strategy: 9 databases searched up to August 2013. No restrictions. Quality assessment: PEDro scale. Measure of treatment effect: SMD. Data synthesis: Meta-analysis.	Studies: 12 studies (9 RCTs, 3 CCTs), 4 in reflexology.  Participants: 152 patients in reflexology studies. Cancer pain	Intervention: Any type of massage. Control: No massage or standard care. Concurrent treatment: Not mentioned. Outcome measures: Pain.	Results for outcome measures: foot reflexology was significantly effective in 4 studies (SMD -1.46 [95% CI -2.45 to -0.47]; p = .004. Results quality assessment: Reflexology studies scored 4,5,6,7 on PEDro scale. Conclusions: Among the various types of massage, foot reflexology appeared to be more effective than body or aroma massage.	Review limitations: Search terms not detailed. Any other comments: Included Chinese and Korean papers. Very well conducted analysis which took account of study quality.