

# A NATURAL WAY TO GOOD HEALTH

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## Sports Massage

Massage has become an integral part of the new athletic regimen from sports medicine clinics, to college training rooms, to professional locker rooms to Olympic training. Growing number of trainers believe that massage can provide an extra edge to the athletes who participate in high performance sports. Massage has become a necessary ingredient for a complete workout. More and more people are realizing that a complete workout routine includes not only the exercise itself, but also caring for the wear-and-tear and minor injuries that naturally occur with strenuous movement. The physiological and psychological

benefits of massage make it an ideal complement to a total conditioning program

Anyone who routinely stretches their physical limits through movement such as running, cycling, hiking, swimming, dancing, tennis and other racquet sports, strength training and aerobics can benefit from a massage. There are others who do strenuous activities in a day that is not normally classified as exercise. Examples are mothers with small children, gardeners, and others who use their bodies strenuously in their work.

Incorporating massage in your conditioning program has many benefits. It helps you get into good shape faster, and with less stiffness and soreness. It helps you recover faster from heavy workouts, and relieves conditions which may cause injury.



## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU EXERCISE?

Regular exercise increases vigor and promotes a general sense of well-being. If done in moderation, it can help relieve the effects of stress, and has been linked to a decrease in psychological depression.

Regular exercise produces positive physical results like increased muscular strength and endurance, more efficient heart and respiratory functioning, and greater flexibility.

These positive physical changes occur as the body gradually adapts to the greater demands put on it by regular exercise. The body improves its functioning to meet the challenges placed on it.

## DID YOU KNOW

- *Massage can provide an extra edge to the athletes.*
- *There are physiological and psychological benefits of massage.*
- *Conditioning involves three phases.*
- *Techniques involve in Sport massage?*
- *Massage can improve power and performance.*

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## CONDITIONING INVOLVES THREE STEPS OR PHASES:



**Tearing Down Phase** - when one pushes the physical limit

**Recovery Phase** - Important for the rebuilding phase and to obtain the full benefits of a conditioning program.

**Buildup Phase** - when the system adapts to the new demands placed on it.

The 'tearing down' phase of the adaptation process often involves stiffness and soreness, especially when the amount of movement is significantly increased from what the body has been used to in the past.

Delayed muscle soreness (24-48 hours after exercise) may be caused by any of a number of different factors. Some possible causes are minor muscle or connective tissue damage, local muscle spasms that reduce blood flow, or a build up of waste products (metabolites) from energy production.

Trigger points or stress points may also cause muscle soreness and decreased flexibility. These points are specific spots in muscle and tendons which cause pain when pressed, and which may radiate pain to a larger area. They are not bruises, but are thought by some to be small areas of spasm. Trigger points may be caused by sudden trauma (like falling or being hit), or may develop over time from the stress and strain of heavy physical exertion or from repeated use of a particular muscle.

Heavily exercised muscles may also lose their capacity to relax, causing chronically tight (hypertonic) muscles, and loss of flexibility. Lack of flexibility is often linked to muscle soreness, and predisposes you to injuries, especially muscle pulls and tears. Blood flow through tight muscles is poor (ischemia), which also causes pain.

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## SPORTS MASSAGE TECHNIQUES



Each sporting and athletic event uses muscle groups in a different way. Sports massage therapists must be familiar with each muscle, the muscle groups and how they are affected by the specific movements and stresses of each sport. They also are trained in the appropriate uses of hydrotherapy and cryotherapy.

Traditional western (e.g. Swedish) massage is currently the most common approach used for conditioning programs. It is frequently supplemented by other massage therapy approaches including deep tissue, trigger point work, and acupressure. Some massage therapists have special training in sports massage and greater experience working with athletes.

## Sports massage therapy frequently includes the use of one or more of the following techniques:

### Deep Swedish Massage

Muscle-specific applications of the standard effleurage, petrissage, vibration, and tapotement techniques.

### Compression Massage

Rhythmic compression into muscles used to create a deep hyperemia and softening effect in the tissues. It is generally used as a warm-up for deeper, more specific massage work.

### Cross-Fiber Massage

Friction techniques applied in a general manner to create a stretching and broadening effect in large muscle groups; or on site-specific muscle and connective tissue, deep transverse friction applied to reduce adhesions and to help create strong, flexible repair during the healing process.

### Trigger Point/Tender Point Massage

Combined positioning and specific finger or thumb pressure into trigger/tender points in muscle and connective tissue, to reduce the hypersensitivity, muscle spasms and referred pain patterns that characterize the point. Left untreated, such trigger/tender points often lead to restricted and painful movement of entire body regions.

### Lymphatic Massage

Stimulation of specialized lymphatic-drainage pathways, which improves the body's removal of edemas and effusion.

MASSAGE WILL  
HELP YOU TO  
IMPROVE  
POWER AND  
PERFORMANCE!



### The Benefits of Sports Massage

Regular sports massage can:

reduce the chance of injury, through proper stretching and event preparation, and through deep tissue massage.

improve range of motion and muscle flexibility, resulting in improved power and performance.

shorten recovery time between workouts.

maximize the supply of nutrients and oxygen through increased blood flow.

enhance elimination of metabolic by-products of exercise.



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a natural approach to good health.

**Sports massage** may involve **prevention and maintenance** programs, on-site treatment before and after an athletic event, and **rehabilitation** programs for those who are injured during the program.

**An effective maintenance program** is based on the massage therapist's understanding of anatomy and kinesiology, combined with an expert knowledge of which muscles are used in a given sport and which are likely candidates for trouble. By zeroing in on particular muscle groups and working specific tissues, the sports massage therapist can help the athlete maintain or improve range of motion and muscle flexibility. The overall objective of a maintenance program is to help the athlete reach optimal performance through injury-free training.

### Rehabilitation Massage

Even with preventive maintenance, muscles cramp, tear, bruise, and ache. Sports massage can speed healing and reduce discomfort during the rehabilitation process.

Soft tissue techniques employed by sports massage therapists are effective in the management of both acute and chronic injuries.

Trigger point techniques reduce the spasms and pain that occur both in the injured and "compensation" muscles.

Cross-fiber friction techniques applied during the subacute and maturation phases of healing improve the formation of strong and flexible repair tissue, which is vital in maintaining full pain-free range of motion during rehabilitation.

## How Does Massage Help?

**Recovery.** Therapeutic massage helps the body recover from the stresses of strenuous exercise, and facilitates the rebuilding phase of conditioning. The physiological benefits of massage include improved blood and lymph circulation, muscle relaxation, and general relaxation. These, in turn, lead to removal of waste products and better cell nutrition, normalization and greater elasticity of tissues, deactivation of trigger points, and faster healing of injuries. It all adds up to relief from soreness and stiffness, better flexibility, and less potential for future injury.

In addition to general recovery, massage may also focus on specific muscles used in a sport or fitness activity. For example, areas of greater stress for runners and dancers are in the legs, for swimmers in the upper body, for tennis players in the arms. These areas are more likely to be tight, lose flexibility, and develop trigger points.



**Over-training.** Adequate recovery is also a major factor in avoiding the **over-training syndrome**. Over-training is characterized by irritability, apathy, altered appetite, increased frequency of injury, increased resting heart rate, and/or insomnia. It occurs when the body is not allowed to recover adequately between bouts of heavy exercise. Therapeutic massage helps you avoid over-training by facilitating recovery through general relaxation, and its other physiological effects.

**Trouble spots.** You may also have your own unique trouble spots, perhaps from past injuries. A **massage therapist can pay special attention** to these areas, monitor them for developing problems, and help keep them in good condition. An experienced **massage therapist can also compliment treatment received from other health care professionals for various injuries.**

