



Benefit of massage therapy on sports performance

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Abstract

Massage is a popular treatment choice of athletes, coaches, and sports physical therapists. Despite its purported benefits and frequent use, evidence demonstrating its efficacy is scarce. To identify current literature relating to sports massage and its role in effecting an athlete's psychological readiness, in enhancing sports performance, in recovery from exercise and competition, and in the treatment of sports related musculoskeletal injuries.

Keywords: massage, sports psychology, sports performance, sports massage, sports recovery

Introduction

Therapeutic massage is believed to increase muscle mass blood flow and muscle tissue temperature, thereby enhancing performance. Professional athletes and their coaches have sworn by massage therapy for years, going so far as to keep massage therapists on the payroll indefinitely. Until recently, there hasn't been conclusive evidence that massage really does have a positive effect on athletes. However, thanks to new studies and some backing by reputable sources, the benefits of massage are being taken seriously. And those benefits are not just for the pros. They're extended to anyone who participates in a regular exercise program.

History of massage

Massage therapy is one of the oldest forms of healthcare. There are manuscripts dating back to ancient China and ancient Egypt that mention the benefits of massage, but modern therapeutic massage is believed to have been established in the nineteenth century in Sweden. Per Hendrik Ling is credited with the invention of the Swedish massage, which remains one of the most popular forms of massage therapy today. Since then, a multiplicity of techniques has been developed across the world, each with its own benefit and use. However, regardless of technique, therapeutic massage holds itself to some common principles.

Purpose

To identify current literature relating to sports massage and its role in effecting an athlete's psychological readiness, in enhancing sports performance, in recovery from exercise and competition, and in the treatment of sports related musculoskeletal injuries.

Benefits of Sports Massage

- **Sports massages alleviate muscle tension.** A massage therapist is able to target tight and tender areas—also referred to as adhesions—with high levels of force. This signals your nervous system to relax, helping to alleviate tension within the targeted muscle.

- **Sports massages improve recovery.** Stevens explains that a sports massage after a tough workout or game may improve recovery by increasing circulation. In fact, a study found that a massage decreased delayed-onset muscle soreness—the extreme soreness you get when exercising a muscle for the first time in a while—by about 30 percent.
- **Sports massages increase range of motion.** Have tight shoulders, hips or other joints? A sports massage can target the stiff muscles that are binding up your joints so you can move through a greater range of motion.
- **Sports massages are more targeted than foam rolling.** Foam rolling is great, but a roller can only target large, broad muscles. Even a lacrosse ball can't replicate what a massage therapist can do with their fingers, thumbs, palms and elbows.
- **Sports massages are relaxing and feel good.** Is your body banged up from constantly pushing yourself? Or are you a bit stressed from your jam-packed schedule of school, sports, training and homework? A massage can help you relax and alleviate some of this physical and psychological stress.

Types of Massage therapy

- **Transverse friction massage** (Cross fiber massage): Usually performed on site specific muscle or tendon.
- **Therapeutic massage:** A systemic and scientific mobilization of the soft tissues of the body.
- **Myofascial release:** A technique that applies prolonged light pressure with specific directions in to the fascia system in order to relieve pain, release restrictions.
- **Trigger point release** (or massage): Applies concentrated finger pressure to "trigger pointed" to break cycles of spasm and pain.

Principle of massage therapy

There are four basic principle of massage:-

- General to specific to general.
- Superficial to deep to superficial.
- Periphery to centre to periphery.

- Proximal to distal to proximal.

Sports Massage Techniques

- Deep Tissue Trigger Point Pressure
- Cross Fiber Friction Strokes
- Deep Swedish Therapeutic massage
- Hot stone massage
- Thai Yoga Massage

Three Areas of Sports Massage

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

Event Massage

Pre-event

Pre-event sports massage is given within the four hours preceding an event to improve performance and help decrease injuries. It is used as a supplement to an athlete's warm-up to enhance circulation and reduce excess muscle and mental tension prior to competition. It is normally shorter (10-15 minutes) than a regular conditioning massage, and focuses on warming-up the major muscles to be used, and getting the athlete in a good mental state for competition. It also improves tissue pliability, readying the athlete for top performance. Certain massage techniques can help calm a nervous athlete, and others can be stimulating. Pre-event. Pre-event sports massage is given within the four hours preceding an event to improve performance and help decrease injuries. It is used as a supplement to an athlete's warm-up to enhance circulation and reduce excess muscle and mental tension prior to competition. It is normally shorter (10-15 minutes) than a regular conditioning massage, and focuses on warming-up the major muscles to be used, and getting the athlete in a good mental state for competition. It also improves tissue pliability, readying the athlete for top performance. Certain massage techniques can help calm a nervous athlete, and others can be stimulating.

Inter- and intra-event

Inter- and intra-event massage is given between events or in time-outs to help athletes recover from the preceding activity, and prepare for the activity coming up. It is also short, and focuses on the major muscles stressed in the activity. Inter- and intra-event massage is given between events or in time-outs to help athletes recover from the preceding activity, and prepare for the activity coming up. It is also short, and focuses on the major muscles stressed in the activity.

Post-event

Post-event sports massage is given after a competition and is mainly concerned with recovery. It is geared toward reducing the muscle spasms and metabolic build-up that occur with vigorous exercise. Recovery after competition involves not only tissue normalization and repair, but also general relaxation and mental calming. A recovery session might be 15 minutes to 1 1/2 hours in length. Post-event sports massage is given after a competition and is mainly concerned with recovery. It is geared toward reducing the muscle spasms and

metabolic build-up that occur with vigorous exercise. Recovery after competition involves not only tissue normalization and repair, but also general relaxation and mental calming. A recovery session might be 15 minutes to 1 1/2 hours in length.

Positive effects of massage therapy

Athletes, including runners, can experience great benefits from massage for many different reasons. These benefits can come in both mental and physical forms.

Mentally

- Complete relaxation.
- Reduction in rigidity and tremor.
- Improvement in sleep.
- Increase in daily stamina.
- Reduction in anxiety.
- Increased feeling of relaxation. Enhancing Attentiveness
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Physically

- Increase rom.
- Decrease pain.
- Activation of the immune system.
- Provide gentle stretching of tissue.
- Encourage lymphatic flow.
- Increase circulation.
- Assists in venous return.

Safety measure about massage therapy

Cautions about massage therapy include the following:

- Vigorous massage should be avoided by people with bleeding disorders or low blood platelet counts.
- Massage should not be done in any area of the body with blood clots, fractures, open or healing wounds, skin infections, or weakened bones (such as from osteoporosis or cancer), or where there has been a recent surgery.
- Although massage therapy appears to be generally safe for cancer patients, they should consult their oncologist before having a massage that involves deep or intense pressure. Any direct pressure over a tumor usually is discouraged. Cancer patients should discuss any concerns about massage therapy with their oncologist.
- Pregnant women should consult their health care provider before using massage therapy.

Conclusion

Massage is believed to benefit sportsmen through its biomechanical, physical, neurological, and psychological devices. Therapeutic massage is believed to benefit sports athletes by enhancing performance and recovery, as well as promoting rest through biomechanical, physiological nerve, and psychological mechanisms. Regardless of the general belief of the advantages of massage, there are limited scientific data on possible methods of massage. Mechanical pressure from massage is thought to increase muscle compliance. A number of studies reported an increase in stationary flexibility as measured by joint range of motion, but these studies were methodologically flawed. Many studies reported that massage may promote relaxation by enhancing

psycho-physiological response. There are several western massage techniques, which are mostly employed in different circumstances for their benefits to the body.

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