

## SPORTS INJURIES

Sports injuries mostly separate into two categories, trauma and training problems – but an injury can fall into both categories when poor training or overuse leads to a muscle imbalance that ends up causing trauma.

### **1. Trauma**

Generally as a result of sudden and direct forces/strains etc. Examples include ligament and other soft-tissue strain or tears such as:

- Torn Anterior Cruciate Ligaments (ACL), a typical skiing or football injury
- Ankle Sprains
- Muscle Tears (although these can also be due to factors such as muscle imbalances and poor training as detailed below)

### **2. Training Problems**

The problems caused by overusing your muscles, incorrect training techniques and training on poor equipment tend to take some time to turn serious. People often say they felt a niggle or a mild ache after their exercise or sporting session, and that this got progressively worse until normal exercise became difficult and the pain lasted longer after the session.

The underlying problem is often a muscle imbalance or bio-mechanical misalignment that you won't notice in your day-to-day activities. It's like driving around town and not noticing you have an unbalanced or wobbly wheel. At low speeds, everything seems fine – but when you hit top speed on the motorway, the problem becomes very obvious. Likewise, a small imbalance in how our bodies move can be amplified when we train or exercise.

Another common problem is using the wrong equipment. For instance, the wrong type of running shoe can misalign your foot and leg as you run, which results in joint strain. You may not notice any problems when you are running short distances, but raising your level of exercise when you have a bio-mechanical problem will soon give you an injury.

#### **Examples of this type of injury include:**

- Anterior Knee Pain (often called Runner's Knee)
- Ilio-Tibial Band (ITB) Friction Syndrome, another common running injury
- Rotator Cuff Tendonitis and Shoulder Impingement
- Achilles Tendonitis
- Calf Strain/Tears

#### ***Poor Core Stability***

Poor core stability also causes this type of injury. If you want your movements to be controlled, efficient and sustainable, then you need a stable foundation. Anything less puts your body through unnecessary wear and tear and strain. The stabilising muscles of your trunk should hold you firmly together, aligned correctly, so you can move efficiently and avoid injury.

Unfortunately, with all the time we spend in sedentary postures, our core stabilising muscles are not challenged as much as they should be. This leads to under-activity and weakness

## SPORTS MASSAGE

**Sports massage** is treatment given with the understanding not only of anatomy and physiology but also of the particular demands placed upon the body by the client and their specific sport.

Sports massage is done with the principal mandate of returning you to your desired sports activity with the same or an even better level of function. Sports massages can include more aggressive techniques that approach muscles more deeply.

Sports massage will often utilise a variety of modalities such as remedial massage, trigger point therapy, cross fibre techniques and deep tissue work. Primarily though, the difference lies with function. That is, returning you to your chosen activity in optimal functional.

### **How Does a Sports Massage Differ to Regular Massage?**

**Regular massage** usually means those treatments offered at beauty spas or relaxation clinics. Both environments offer valid treatment for overworked, stressed muscles. However, sports and remedial massage differs in both its purpose and the techniques used. While nearly all massage therapists can perform regular massage, only those with specific sports massage skills are adequately equipped to perform a sublime sports massage.

## PRE- EVENT SPORTS MASSAGE

A **pre-event massage** is a short, specific treatment given immediately before (30 minutes- 24 hours before) a sports event. The goal of massage is to increase your circulation, flexibility and mental clarity to improve your performance.

A pre-event sports massage does not replace your warm up, but complements it. It is important for your massage therapist to know your sport or activity and what muscles are likely to be used the most. It is also useful to assess your athletic condition and needs well prior to the event. The pre-event massage is not the time and place to be performing deep or remedial treatment.

Factors such as temperature, anxiety, fatigue and hyperactivity are considered before your massage treatment. If you are cold, then more warming things need to be done. If are already warmed up, your therapist will focus on flexibility. If you are nervous some soothing strokes may be called for. As you can see, the pre-event sports massage will vary depending upon you and your chosen sport.

The amount and depth of treatment is the most important key to effective pre-event massage. Deep tissue work is usually contraindicated during a pre-event massage as it may cause too much of an increase in flexibility and it may interfere with your muscle timing and strength.

A high quality sports massage therapist will keep your sports goal in mind at all times!

## POST- EVENT SPORTS MASSAGE

Recovery is the primary purpose of post-event sports massage. Athletes push themselves harder during an event than while training. It's your competitive spirit pushing you to the limit. For example, during a marathon most athletes run a greater distance during the event than they've ever run during their training. A massage afterward is vital to assist a hasty pain-free recovery.

Your sports massage therapist will aim to relax your muscle tone, improve your recovery circulation, and restore your flexibility. This allows for a quicker recovery and return to training without the usual stiffness and soreness.

Post-event massage can also be that first assessment for potential injuries, and more serious medical conditions (heat exhaustion or hypothermia), which may be identified early and treated promptly.

The school of thought is out as to when you will achieve the best results in a post-event massage: immediately or the next day.

In an ideal world, such as professional sport, they have light daily or heavier alternate day massages. You be the judge as to what works best for you!