

Marolyn's Massage Update

Summer 2013

Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

At the Top of Your Game

Sports Massage a Must for Athletic Performance

Cathy Ulrich

"It was my first marathon and I'd been fighting a 20 mile-an-hour headwind for most of the race. When I finished, my upper back and hamstrings were so tight I couldn't stretch them myself," says Colorado athlete Camie Larson. "My husband, Jamie, found me and led me to the massage line. When I got to the massage therapist, she quickly assessed my condition. She worked on my hamstrings, softening and gently stretching them until they were loose enough so I could stretch them myself the rest of the day. She also worked on my back and shoulders, which were tight from battling the headwind. I'm convinced I would have been in big trouble had I not gotten the massage."

Professional athletes have known about the benefits of regular massage for some time, but amateur athletes and even weekend warriors find that massage is important for them, too. Most trainers and coaches advise their clients to get regular massage to enhance workouts, recover from competition, and rehabilitate injuries.

Muscles and Massage

Our muscles are designed to adapt to the demand of strenuous exercise. Athletic training and competition, or even exertion from heavy physical work, tears down the muscles involved. When muscles are allowed to recover following a workout, they increase their number

"The way is not in the sky. The way is in the heart"

-Buddha



Regular massages while training for an event help athletes avoid injury and reduce fatigue.

Larson is just one example of a triathlete and runner who includes massage in her regular training routine. She commits to a massage every other week during the heaviest part of her training season and says, "If I get too busy and don't get a massage, I really notice the difference. My legs and shoulders are tighter and it's much harder to recover from training sessions."

of fibers to respond to the demand. This adaptation process builds strength in muscles and in the structural support of the surrounding soft tissues. It also affects their ability to relax.

Regular massage reduces the risk of injury by maintaining flexibility and

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Office Hours and Contact

www.accessbodyworks.com
Email: marolyn@accessbodyworks.com
970-669-9405 (call or text)
By Appointment only: Tues - Sat.

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range of motion. By helping the body eliminate the metabolic by-products of a workout, massage shortens recovery time and reduces soreness. In addition, massage improves circulation, which enhances athletic performance by increasing the oxygen and nutrient supply to the muscles.

Triathletes and runners aren't the only athletes who benefit. Cyclists and winter sports fanatics are taking to massage as well. A massage therapist can help assess each athlete's problem areas and target these specifically.

When to Get Massage

Depending on the athlete's specific sport and physical demands, massage can be targeted to different aspects of the athlete's needs. Massage is most effective when integrated throughout an individual's training program.

TRAINING

By getting regular massages during the training period prior to an event, an athlete can avoid injury, maintain flexibility and range of motion, recover more quickly from workouts, and reduce fatigue. Depending on how strenuous the training, it may be important to see your massage therapist weekly or even more often, especially during the heaviest part of your training. Your massage therapist can work with you to establish a schedule for your needs.

PRE-EVENT MESSAGE

Many formal athletic events, including running races, triathlons, and tennis tournaments, provide onsite massage. Pre-event massages are usually short (10-15 minutes), and are designed to increase circulation, relax muscle tension, and calm pre-event jitters. A short massage can enhance performance so the athlete stays relaxed and on his/her game plan. For pre-event massage, talk to the therapist about your massage history. Bodies used to massage will react differently than those unaccustomed to bodywork.

POST-EVENT MESSAGE

Recovery is the primary purpose of post-event massage. Athletes push themselves harder during an event than while training. For example, during a marathon most athletes run a greater distance during the event than they've

ever run during their training. A massage afterwards is key. In Camie Larson's case, her massage therapist was able to relax her muscle tone, improve her circulation, and restore her flexibility. This allowed for a quicker recovery and return to training without the stiffness and soreness she would have had otherwise. Post-event massage can be that first assessment for potential injuries, and more serious medical conditions (heat exhaustion or hypothermia) may be identified early and treated promptly.

REHABILITATION

Muscle strains, bruises from contact sports, and chronic soreness need special attention. Whether encountered during training or during an event, massage is a key component in assisting an athlete to return to their sport sooner. Massage therapists can work closely with doctors and athletic trainers

to establish a schedule for therapy. Specific manual techniques reduce scar tissue and muscle spasm, and the enhanced circulation achieved from massage is crucial to healing.

"I'd pay more for an event to have massage available," Larson says. "When I compete in events where there's no massage, I definitely notice a difference the next day. When I'm training, my massage therapist works out the kinks, which allows me to train a little harder. It's the difference between having fun and being a hurting unit."

Whether its professional marathon training or weekend warrior sports, getting a massage can ease muscle soreness, help your body recover more quickly, and get you ready to go again. And, of course, massage helps you deeply relax--an important key to overall wellness.



Getting a massage after a strenuous workout or event helps minimize soreness.

Happiness is Contagious

Maybe mom was right. Research suggests that surrounding yourself with friends and family who are happy can actually increase your own happiness.

Scientists at Harvard University and the University of California, San Diego, found that emotions, particularly happiness, have a viral effect in how they spread from one person to another. For every happy person in your physical social network, you have a 9 percent chance of increasing your own happiness. The effect is more pronounced the closer someone is to you geographically, and it does not seem to include electronic communications. The study, "Dynamic Spread of Happiness in a Large Social Network," can be found online in the British Medical Journal (www.bmj.com).

This is especially good news considering the potential health benefits of happiness and positivity. A study published in *Stroke* magazine has indicated a "significant association"

between optimism and a reduced risk of stroke. This is in addition to studies that have linked optimism to a healthier immune system, faster wound healing, and a lower risk of heart disease. While the exact cause of the benefits is not clear, one theory is that optimistic people are more likely to take care of their health. In addition, there is hope that teaching optimism could become part of a preventative program for various conditions.

What's one way to get happy? Try massage! Exposure to stress, a contributing factor to unhappiness, over a long period of time can increase the rate of neural degeneration and increase the risk for Alzheimer's disease. Luckily, a study from Umea University in Sweden has shown that just five minutes of massage has the potential to lower stress, and 80 minutes of massage has a tremendously positive effect on stress levels. Get massage, get happy, and cheer up your friends and family!



Surrounding yourself with happy people is healthy!

Secrets of Sleep

Jed Heneberry

We've all heard it before: get your eight hours of sleep and watch your life improve. But the reason we've all heard it is because it's true, and research keeps showing the importance of sleep and its variety of health benefits.

The National Sleep Foundation says there is no "magic number" of hours for optimum sleep benefits, but that different age groups, and even different individuals, need different amounts of sleep. General recommendations are 7-8 hours per night for adults, while children often need 10-11 hours. Getting less than what you need has been linked to an increased risk of diabetes, heart problems, psychiatric conditions, and more.

Here's a quick look at some new findings that reveal the secrets of sleep, and also

how to get more of it.

- **Sleep Suppresses Appetite:** Just one night of sleep loss can increase brain activity in the region that contains appetite sensation in response to food images, increasing the long-term possibility of becoming overweight. "Lack of Sleep Makes Your Brain Hungry," *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*.

- **Naps for Your Noggin:** The right side of the brain, which is generally associated with creativity, is active during so-called power naps, while the left brain remains mostly quiet. While it is not clear what exactly is happening during these brief rest periods, researchers suspect the brain is conducting important memory tasks. "'Power Naps' May Boost Right-Brain

Activity," *Health.com*.

- **Cherry on Top:** Drinking tart cherry juice increased melatonin in study participants, improving sleep efficiency, quality, and time. "Effect of Tart Cherry Juice on Melatonin Levels and Enhanced Sleep Quality," *European Journal of Nutrition*.

*"You are a child
of the universe,
no less than the
trees and the
stars; you have a
right to be
here...strive to
be happy."*

-Max Erhmann

PLAI OIL

Plai essential oil (Zingiber cassumunar) is distilled from the roots of Plai. This plant grows wild in Thailand and is of the ginger family. It is highly regarded for its powerful anti-inflammatory, analgesic and rejuvenating properties. Although it is in the ginger family it has a cooling effect versus the classic warming sensation of ginger.

SALE: 5 ml bottles for \$13.00

Hope everyone enjoys the upcoming growing seasons!!

Be well,

Marolyn

Access Bodyworks LLC

501 Cleveland Ave
Loveland, CO 80537



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