

Topic of the Month

JULY IS A TIME TO HAVE SOME FUN!

The first thing to do is start and the second is to continue. – Chinese Proverb

MASSAGE FOR ATHLETES



MASSAGE CAN ALLEVIATE BREATHING PATTERN DISORDERS:

Some people, athletes included, experience what is known as breathing pattern disorders, shallow and rapid breath patterns that only utilize the muscles in the upper body, rather than the diaphragm and intercostal muscles involved in normal breathing. Massage can actually help athletes breathe deeper and alleviate breathing pattern disorders. It helps lengthen and relax the muscles, including the smooth muscles of the diaphragm area, the intercostal muscles and the abdominal connective tissue. Releasing and lengthening these muscles helps improve blood flow and oxygen delivery throughout the body.

IMPROVE POSTURE & FORM:

Having correct form is very important for athletes of all kinds. From runners to rock climbers, posture and form can mean the difference between winning the gold and staying home. Besides the time it takes to learn correct posture or form, our bodies sometimes get into habits of poor posture and form due to physical stress. Massage therapy can help reduce stress in the body, allowing it to return to its normal shape. Massage softens the muscles, allowing them to relax enough for the bones to move back into their normal structure.

HELP WITH CHRONIC PAIN:

For athletes, chronic pain can manifest itself as repeated stress on one specific area of the body that is never fully allowed to heal. During a massage, research has shown the body produces hormones called endorphins, which inhibit pain receptors, essentially reducing the intensity of the feeling of pain in the body. Endorphins also reduce overall stress in the body, which allows athletes to rest more easily and fully. Ultimately, this rest is what will allow the body to heal, so endorphin production doesn't just reduce the sensation of pain, it also allows the body to relax and access the natural healing it needs.

REDUCE CORTISOL PRODUCTION:

At the same time that regular massage increases the production of endorphins, it decreases the production of cortisol, a hormone that causes stress in the body. Research has shown repeatedly that massage decreases cortisol production, which has a damaging effect on the physical body as well as the mind, impairing an athlete's ability to perform at his or her best.

BUILD NEW MITOCHONDRIA:

Last but not least, maybe the most surprising benefit of massage is what happens on the cellular level. Research has shown massage after strenuous activity promotes the growth of new mitochondria in our cells. If you took high school biology, you will remember the function of the mitochondria. They're the "powerhouse" of the cell. What that means functionally is that mitochondria are what converts the food we eat into energy in the form our body can use. The more mitochondria in a cell, the more that cell can make usable energy. For athletes, the more mitochondria they have, the stronger and better they can perform.

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Ask how acupuncture can help!

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