

# The Art and Science of Sports Maintenance Massage

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*Taken From <http://www.massagetoday.com/mpacms/mt/article.php?id=10835>*

"Sports maintenance massage" is performed when an athlete has reduced his or her training schedule, is not competing, or during the athlete's "off-season." A sports maintenance massage works with an athlete's strength, flexibility, coordination, biomechanics, posture, stress patterns, scar tissue and existing injuries.

It also allows the therapist and athlete to work together to create the greatest changes for the athlete.

Information used in sports maintenance massage is gathered from discussing the athlete's goals, watching the athlete's workouts or competitions, recording current or previous injuries and prior treatments, including massage, and setting specific goals for a sports maintenance massage program.

Sometimes, athletes do not perform well during a season because of a recurring injury. There is not time for massage, long rest periods and specific exercises for proper rehabilitation during the season, and most athletes do not want to miss playing because of injuries, so they return to action even though their injuries have not healed sufficiently. This is why sports maintenance massage is performed when the athlete is not competing or during the off-season.

For example, a sports maintenance massage might involve working with an athlete who has had a recurring hamstring problem. Some considerations for the application of massage would include looking at the athlete's biomechanics, posture, flexibility, strength, scar tissue formation, and other contributing factors. Athletes that suffer from low back pain will tighten their hamstrings to compensate for the injury. Working on the hamstrings will not eliminate the cause - it will only treat the symptom. If the problem is directly within the hamstring, the first consideration should be to determine if the injury is in the acute or chronic stage. An injury in the acute stage could be red, hot, swollen and painful, and working directly on the site of injury in this stage would be contraindicated.

When the injury is in the chronic stage, non-specific compression of the site, range-of-motion movements and ice treatments would be appropriate. Advance to cross fiber friction with movement and ice treatments as the injury heals. Strengthen and stretch the hamstrings once the athlete can go through a full range of motion without pain.

Whatever the course of action in sports maintenance massage, an athlete must be allowed ample time to heal and incorporate the massage treatments into his or her performance. Sometimes it takes weeks to resolve a specific problem properly. Learning to apply sports

massage properly is a never-ending process, and understanding the timing of the treatment is crucial to effective sports application. Sports maintenance massages are where the greatest changes can occur.

I hope this information is helpful and that you enjoy being a part of the massage therapy profession.

Take care,

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Click **here** for more information about Michael McGillicuddy, LMT, NCTMB.