

What is Myofascial Release?

A highly specialized stretching technique utilized by Physical Therapists to treat clients with a host of soft tissue problems is called Myofascial Release.

It is necessary to first understand the fascia in the body and how it works. Fascia is a thin tissue that is responsible for covering all of the organs in the body. In order to comprehend Myofascial Release, one needs to understand the way the fascia covers every muscle and each fiber inside of each muscle. The stretching of the myofascial unit is actually the stretching of the fascia along with the muscle and this describes the basic mechanics of how every muscle stretches.

The fascia that surrounds the muscle and its surrounding muscle fibers become tight and short whenever muscle fibers are injured. The stress caused from uneven muscle fibers can actually be transmitted through the fascia to other areas of the body. This can lead to pain and numerous other symptoms that you may not realize at first are related. Myofascial Release works to release uneven tightness within injured fascia and treats these symptoms.

Myofascial Release is therefore the process of stretching the fascia. How deep the stretch goes is dependent on the feedback the therapist receives from the patient's body. The feedback guides the therapist and tells how much force is required as well as how long to stretch. Tiny muscle areas are stretched at a time. A therapist commonly only uses two fingers at a time to stretch a small part of the muscle. The feedback felt by the therapist determines what order the muscles are stretched in and how far to stretch them.

The same components are contained in every Myofascial Release technique. For example, the therapist first locates the area of tightness and applies a light stretch to that location. Next, the Physical Therapist waits for the tissue to relax and then gradually increases the stretch. This process is repeated until the area becomes completely relaxed. The therapist then moves on to the next area.

A trained practitioner can locate sore spots just by feeling with their hands. It is common for patients to be unable to pinpoint their sore spots as they have become accustomed to the pain. The Physical Therapist can locate tissue knots and help to facilitate healing through releasing. Myofascial Trigger Points refer to the technical name for these sore spots. After treatment, the sensitivity and size of these spots decreases until they completely heal.

The majority of patients are quite surprised by how gentle Myofascial Release is. In fact, many patients fall asleep during treatment; while others have a nap soon after returning home. The majority of patients find Myofascial Release to be an extremely relaxing form of treatment.

It is important to note that Myofascial Release is not considered a form of massage. This technique is utilized to equalize muscle tension within the body. Muscles and nerves can become compressed with unequal muscle tension and pain can result. The progress of Myofascial Release is measured by an overall improvement in posture and decrease in patient's pain.