**Kinesiology Taping**

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Physical activity is one of the keys to a long and healthy life, but unfortunately injuries tend to pile up along the way. Sometimes, those injuries are a result of ‘overdoing it’ and pushing our bodies a little further than they wanted to be pushed. Other times, it is just the inevitable result of aging and our bodies not being able to perform like they used to. Whatever the case, injuries have a nasty way of knocking us off track and causing us to fall short of our fitness goals.

Naturally, any method of care that can reduce pain and improve body function stands to be a great benefit to the user. One such method is through the use of Kinesiology Tape. Unlike ‘old fashioned’ tape which was rigid and unforgiving, Kinesiology Tape is made of cotton and nylon so that it will stretch in only one direction and will provide support while still allowing for a full range of motion. Some of the many benefits of using Kinesiology Tape include pain control, increased circulation, increased joint proprioception, and lymph flow.

**A Brief History of Taping**

If your image of athletic taping is still the standard 1.5” rolls of white tape found in training rooms all-across the country, you are not alone. Many of us have memories of wrapping up ankles and wrists in that style of tape before sporting events of years gone by. That tape existed as a way to restrict joint motion. While this can make sense for preventing an already injured joint from getting worse, what good does it do to restrict the movement of a healthy joint for injury prevention? Some in the medical field are starting to think that we may be inadvertently causing other injuries by forcing the motion from one area of the body up into another area away from the tape. It is with these limitations in mind that many started to think about a better way to tape athletes for optimum performance and safety.

**Been Around for Longer than You Think**

For those who watched the Beijing Olympics in 2008, Kinesiology Tape had something of a coming out party at those games. With colorful designs and prominent placement on many of the athletes, casual observers started asking questions about what the tape was, and what it was used for. However, Kinesiology tape has actually been around for decades and invented by Japanese Chiropractor Dr. Kenzo Kase. Dr. Kase believed that his product could do many things, including decreasing pain through stimulating the neurological system, correcting muscle function, reducing muscle spasms, and removing congestion of lymphatic fluid.

Kinesiology tape can be used by anyone wanting to perform at their best. Kinesiology Tape can be used to help both world-class athletes and so called ‘weekend warriors’ who just wish to remain healthy and pain free so they can partake in the sports that they love. In addition, persons who want to self apply can do so to see if it will help them do every day activities easier and pain free.

**Works in a Variety of Ways**

Using Kinesiology Tape is a rather simple process that is capable of producing some impressive results. Unlike normal athletic tape, which is typically only worn during an activity, Kinesiology Tape is normally worn for between three and five days to maximize its effectiveness.

By applying the tape to an inflamed area, convolutions are formed. These convolutions increase the space between the skin and underlying fascia (layer of connective tissue), thus increasing the flow of blood and lymphatic fluid. Tape that stretches in one direction means you are allowed a full range of motion while simultaneously protecting the joint through increased proprioception and circulation. Kinesiology Tape also acts as a pain mediator through two proposed mechanisms: the pain gate theory, in which mechanoreceptors are stimulated and inhibit pain communication with the brain; and by increasing the subcutaneous space thereby relieving pressure on the nerves themselves.

Kinesiology Tape is a commonly used intervention in the management of a number of clinical conditions including knee pain and shoulder impingement syndrome (Callaghan, Selfe, Bagley, and Oldham, 2002; Copping and ODriscoll, 2005). Taping may also aid in the facilitation and inhibition of muscle activity (Alexander et al, 2003); repositioning of joints (Zanella, Willey, Seibel, and Hughes, 2001); injury prevention (Kneeshaw, 2002), and to improve proprioception (Callaghan, Selfe, Bagley, and Oldham, 2002; Kneeshaw, 2002).

**Putting it into Action**

Using Kinesiology Tape for yourself is a relatively straightforward process. If you have a specific area that always provides you with nagging pain, or if you have recently suffered and injury and would like to treat that spot, using Kinesiology Tape is a great option. Just like when starting a workout, you’ll get better results from the tape if you do your ‘correctives’ first. Make sure you have no open cuts or sores on the skin that you are going to tape. Other contraindications are infection, cancer, and a condition called lymphedema.

First, wipe the skin where the tape is going to be applied with some alcohol swabs. This will get rid of oils and dirt on the skin. Then cut the tape to the desired length. Pull the backing off (without touching the adhesive), and lay the tape down where you want it to go with no tension. Then put the area of the skin under tension (stretch) while laying the rest of the tape down with no stretch. For some example videos of Kinesiology Taping applications by the author, please go to [www.SportsPlusBayArea.com/WalkAboutMagazine](http://www.SportsPlusBayArea.com/WalkAboutMagazine).

You can find Kinesiology Tape at a variety of retailers near you. It is rather affordable when compared to many other treatment methods, and can be applied quickly at home. If you enjoy being active and hope to keep up with your activities pain free for many years to come, Kinesiology Tape just might be a big step in the right direction.

About the Author:

Dr. Le Cara is a chiropractic clinician and educator in the San Francisco Bay Area and owns and operates SportsPlus in Pleasanton, CA. He is a Master Instructor for RockTape USA (a brand of Kinesiology Tape) and is seen lecturing around the World. Most recently he has lectured at Kona Ironman Sports Medicine Conference, The NorCal Fitness Summit, Florida International University, and the Fascial Taping Summit. To contact him, email at [drlecara@SportsPlusBayArea.com](mailto:drlecara@SportsPlusBayArea.com) or follow on Twitter: @drlecara. Shortly after the release of this article, he will host a live webinar demonstrating different taping applications and answer questions. Register for the webinar at [www.SportsPlusBayArea.com/WalkAboutMagazine](http://www.SportsPlusBayArea.com/WalkAboutMagazine).