

The Art and Science of Kinesiology Taping, Part 2

This is the second installment of a two-part series on kinesiology taping. Click here to read [“The Art and Science of Kinesiology Taping, Part 1.”](#)



How tape works

Considering that the skin contains more mechanoreceptors than any other part of our body, it should come as no surprise how combining manual therapy with a tactile feedback mechanism like kinesiology tape can have incredible results that last long after our clients leave our treatment tables. When taping athletes, I can literally invoke movement re-education—think posture correction, patterning corrections, and muscle activation; reduce pain and inflammation; and increase sports performance and recovery, all while reinforcing the work done during manual therapy. All of this can be accomplished without restricting range of motion, and in about five minutes or less. Common ailments we see in our offices, such as rotator cuff injuries, whiplash, shin splints, knee issues, low back pain, upper trapezius pain and plantar fasciitis all can benefit from kinesiology taping.

We all want solid research and evidence to support a treatment modality before we go experimenting on our clients. Paul Coker, P.T., medical director for RockTape, based in the United Kingdom, offers key scientific points for the role of kinesiology tape in treatment. According to him, the decompressive properties of tape provide three key effects to consider: the fluid effect, the mechanical effect and the neurological effect.

Fluid effect

The fluid effect is induced by the elastic properties of the tape, which produce a vertical lift of skin from the underlying tissue, thus decompressing the space between skin and muscle. Understanding fascia, you get the importance of this. This direct effect on the subcutaneous layer promotes improved blood and lymphatic flow in the area where you apply the tape, thus creating speedy removal of injury waste products and pain-generating chemicals, which in turn promotes healing. This sounds strangely like the changes we aim to create through massage.

Mechanical effect

If I had a dollar for every time the word awareness was used in movement and massage settings, I would own movement labs all over the universe. We all know that body awareness is critical for numerous reasons, and tape is the superhero of awareness.

Tape has longitudinal stretch properties of about 140 to 180 percent. These stretch properties are similar to those of skin, muscle and connective tissues. Tape taps into the body's stabilization system like a metaphorical tap on the shoulder. By giving your clients a tool that provides a little extra spring and awareness of stretch to the muscles, ligaments, tendons, and joints, you've given them a tactile, mechanical feedback mechanism. As a bonus, it just might also play a role in restoring normal slide-and-glide mechanics between layers of tissue. That's awareness wearing a cape.

Neurological effect

The neurological effect of tape is impressive, but again, not surprising. The decompressive properties of tape reduce pressure and compression on nerve endings just under the skin, making nerves fire less, thus having a direct effect on the pain gate. Do you have a client with really tight muscles? Tape the area to reduce the response to being stretched, and you've helped create a less sore and tight muscle. Do any of your clients have weak, sore and injured tissue? Taping will help the body's active stabilization by altering the activity and feedback from nerves in the skin and underlying tissue.

Research indicates kinesiology tape improves power and strength in uninjured muscles; reduces pain and improves function in painful conditions like plantar fasciitis and patellofemoral pain; improves pain, range of motion and function in people with shoulder impingement; and raises the anaerobic threshold of muscle during endurance activity.

When not to tape

It is imperative to understand when not to use kinesiology tape. Tape's benefits can cause complications in some instances. There are five conditions in which tape would be considered contraindicated, which is where a thorough client medical history is essential. Those conditions are: deep vein thrombosis; kidney problems and renal insufficiencies; active cancer; infection; and congestive heart failure. Avoid these five conditions with your tape and be thorough with your intakes.

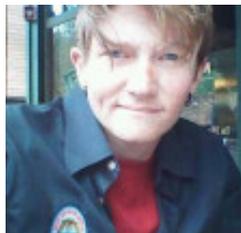
Try tape

Tape doesn't discriminate. The benefits of taping reach far beyond athletic settings. Whether your work environment is in a spa or doing lymph drainage work, pregnancy work, pediatric therapies, neuropathy issues or equine massage, taping can make a dramatic difference for both you and the clients you serve.

Right after I worked on my athlete with the pulled hamstring, mentioned in Part 1 of this series, I saw another client that day. He is a 75-year-old post-heart-transplant patient with a 10-inch scar

down the center of his chest. Right after I did manual scar tissue release therapy, I reinforced my work with kinesiology tape on him, too.

He asked for the tiger stripe print. (His wife liked it.)



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