

SPORTS MASSAGE

SUSAN FINDLAY

An illustrated guide of 39 techniques

HANDS-ON GUIDES
FOR THERAPISTS

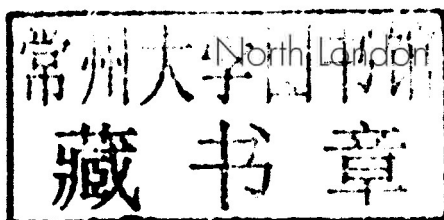


Sports Massage

Hands-On Guides for Therapists

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Human Kinetics

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Findlay, Susan, 1956-

Sports massage / Susan Findlay.

p. ; cm. -- (Hands-on guides for therapists)

ISBN-13: 978-0-7360-8260-0 (soft cover)

ISBN-10: 0-7360-8260-3 (soft cover)

1. Sports massage. I. Title. II. Series: Hands-on guides for therapists.

[DNLN: 1. Massage--methods. 2. Programmed Instruction. 3. Sports Medicine. WB 18.2

F494s 2010]

RC1226.F56 2010

615.8'22088796--dc22

2009032812

ISBN-10: 0-7360-8260-3 (print)

ISBN-13: 978-0-7360-8260-0 (print)

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Acquisitions Editor: John Dickinson, PhD; **Developmental Editor:** Amanda S. Ewing; **Assistant Editors:** Casey A. Gentis and Melissa J. Zavala; **Copyeditor:** Patsy Fortney; **Permission Manager:** Dalene Reeder; **Graphic Designer:** Nancy Rasmus; **Graphic Artist:** Yvonne Griffith; **Cover Designer:** Bob Reuther; **Photographer (cover):** Nigel Farrow; **Photographer (interior):** Nigel Farrow; **Visual Production Assistant:** Joyce Brumfield; **Photo Production Manager:** Jason Allen; **Art Manager:** Kelly Hendren; **Associate Art Manager:** Alan L. Wilborn; **Illustrator:** Jason M. McAlexander, MFA; **Printer:** United Graphics

We thank the North London School of Sports Massage in London, England, for assistance in providing the location for the photo shoot for this book.

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

The paper in this book is certified under a sustainable forestry program.

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Series Preface

Massage may be one of the oldest therapies still used today. At present more therapists than ever before are practicing an ever-expanding range of massage techniques. Many of these techniques are taught through massage schools and within degree courses. Our need now is to provide the best clinical and educational resources that will enable massage therapists to learn the required techniques for delivering massage therapy to clients. Human Kinetics has developed the Hands-On Guides for Therapists series with this in mind.

The Hands-On Guides for Therapists series provides specific tools of assessment and treatment that fall well within the realm of massage therapists but may also be useful for other bodyworkers, such as osteopaths and fitness instructors. Each book in the series is a step-by-step guide to delivering the techniques to clients. Each book features a full-colour interior packed with photos illustrating every technique. Tips provide handy advice to help you adjust your technique, and the Client Talk boxes contain examples of how the techniques can be used with clients who have particular problems. Throughout each book are questions that enable you to test your knowledge and skill, which will be particularly helpful if you are attempting to pass a qualification exam. We've even provided the answers too!

You might be using a book from the Hands-On Guides for Therapists series to obtain the required skills to help you pass a course or to brush up on skills you learned in the past. You might be a course tutor looking for ways to make massage therapy come alive with your students. This series provides easy-to-follow steps that will make the transition from theory to practice seem effortless. The Hands-On Guides for Therapists series is an essential resource for all those who are serious about massage therapy.

When asked to write this book, I was faced with the difficult task of determining the definition of sports massage within the industry. Is sports massage defined by the techniques we use and the manner in which we use them, or does the definition simply depend on the clients we work with? The answer is not clear cut because it varies not only from country to country but also from person to person.

Massage originated in ancient civilizations. In its simplest form, people would instinctively rub or hold an injured area in order to relieve pain. Massage has evolved into many forms, but the original elements are still evident in all types. Today a common definition has emerged from the name itself, *sports massage*, which is the application of a variety of soft tissue techniques to maximize the performance of athletes. This is partially true, but the manner in which we get our results will often include remedial techniques such as soft tissue release or muscle energy techniques. Furthermore, it can also be argued that the same techniques used in sports massage are not exclusive for athletes; rather, they can be applied to those who do not participate in any sport or have just a passing interest in physical activity. This is why there is such a wide variety of definitions of sports massage.

Whomever you are working with, massage has a holistic result despite the varying opinions about a lack of evidenced-based research on massage. It can be difficult to quantify data when conducting any research because there are so many variables to consider: the therapist, the client, the training, the style, and the techniques. Yet from my years of experience, I've seen how effective massage therapy can be, which is all the evidence I've needed to continue doing the job.

This book provides sports massage therapists with the essential tools for delivering a well-thought-out massage session in a sport or general context. Part I covers how to get started and what you need to consider before you start. It specifies when you should and should not use massage and the benefits that can be derived from hands-on therapy, and it features a quick-reference pathology section that will be useful throughout your career. Parts II and III focus on the application of the techniques by demonstrating multiple positions, which will allow you to form your own style. Part IV takes you through the assessment process using a variety of tools, beginning with a verbal consultation, moving on to visual assessments, and ending with movement and strength testing. Charts and questionnaires will help you design your own consultation forms, or you can use the ones provided. The final chapters cover working in a sporting environment, whether at a local event or in an elite setting.

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You will find talk boxes and tips throughout each chapter. Talk boxes focus on experiential information and give practical advice. Tips draw out important points to remember or summarize large sections for easy reference. You can refer to both as needed to reinforce your learning.

Sports Massage emphasizes working efficiently and applying techniques with ease and sensitivity. This approach will make your job easier, increase your longevity as a therapist, and improve the quality of your touch. You will be able to address and correct the common injuries that therapists often incur as a result of incorrect positioning and movement. You will also be able to apply the specialized techniques in a more effective and controlled manner.

Your training as a sports massage therapist should not stop here; rather, it should evolve through the addition of remedial and advanced techniques. With a good foundation, you will have greater success in all areas.

Acknowledgments

This book was written and supported by the efforts of many people, all of whom I want to give my heartfelt thanks to.

A special thanks to Chris Salvary who spent the Christmas holiday proof reading my material. To Albie McMahon for his initial support and editing. To Elizabeth Soames who took the time out of her busy schedule to write a piece about working with an elite sports team.

My thanks and appreciation to John Dickinson and Amanda Ewing from Human Kinetics who gave unending advice and support. To Jane Johnson, whose idea for this series originated with.

I have had the privilege of working with a great team of teachers that have supported me throughout this venture, a family that has kept me laughing and focused, and friends who have remained friends despite my lack of participation in their lives while I wrote this book.

I thank all of you that are true to the profession and only want the best for the future, you are the future.

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Getting Started With Sports Massage

In chapters 1 through 3 you will find relevant information about how to get started as a sports massage therapist. Chapters 1 and 2 cover your foundational techniques, the appropriate use of those techniques within a session, and the benefits and contraindications associated with them. Chapter 2 contains a section on general pathology that will help further develop your abilities as a safe and effective therapist. This section will enable you to work more holistically and make important decisions about what modifications are needed in order to accommodate the body's current state of health.

The pathology section serves as a quick reference guide to various systemic or soft tissue conditions and details the massage modifications necessary to deliver an effective and safe soft tissue treatment. Chapter 2 warrants revisiting over the course of time as and when it is needed. Chapter 3 helps you make decisions about where you are likely to offer your services as well as the practical information needed in order to set up.

At the end of each chapter are Quick Questions that reinforce the material covered and help you to focus on the main points.



1

Introduction to Sports Massage

Welcome to sports massage. If you are new to this form of massage or have never had any formal training, or if you want to improve your skills and understanding of sports massage, then this is the place to start. Whatever stage you are at in your practice, you will find useful tips about how to start out or improve your practice throughout this book. This chapter takes you to the beginning of the story, laying the foundation about how sports massage works, when and where you can use it, and the scope of possibilities it can offer a client.

What Is Sports Massage?

Sports massage is a deep form of soft tissue work that is applied in a sporting context. It consists of a variety of techniques that include effleurage, petrissage, tapotement, vibration, compression, deep strokes and friction. Some of the more advanced techniques range from soft tissue release, neuromuscular techniques, myofascial release, muscle energy techniques, positional release, connective tissue manipulation and many more. The main focus of sports massage is to help the athlete achieve peak performance and remain injury free as well as to support the healing of injuries. As a sports massage therapist, you should be able to perform an appropriate range of assessment and evaluation processes as well as recognise common sports injuries. You should also be able to design and implement comprehensive treatment plans with realistic and achievable goals.

Who Should Be Treated?

Sports massage is not limited to athletes. It is appropriate for anyone who is in need of remedial or soft tissue work irrespective of age, level of fitness or gender. The remedial effects of sports massage can be beneficial in the postsurgical setting; as an adjunct to

physiotherapy, osteopathy or chiropractic in rehabilitative therapy; or as a health benefit within the office environment. Although the name might imply a sporting clientele, it is a therapy appropriate to all.

Within the sporting context, experts recommend that athletes use sports massage as a regular part of their training programs rather than having sporadic massage sessions. Because regular massage has cumulative benefits, it is more effective as a performance enhancement than occasional massage, which could disrupt performance. Athletes new to massage should not have their first sports massage sessions close to an upcoming event; they are better served by starting with regular sessions after an event.

How Does Sports Massage Work?

Up until now, research has not been able to quantify how and why massage works. Although it is offered widely within the fitness industry and medical fields, evidenced-based research has not so far provided satisfactory answers about the mechanisms and benefits of massage. The studies that have been done are confusing and give conflicting or, at best, equivocal results. Until more high-quality, methodologically sound studies are conducted, the best method of determining the benefits of massage is to gauge the response of the athlete.

It is believed that sports massage works both mechanically and reflexively. Mechanically, massage works with the skin, fascia, muscle and connective tissues through pressure and movement. It softens, lengthens or stretches the soft tissue, thereby increasing the range of motion within soft tissue structures, which can lead to greater flexibility and ease of movement. This process has the potential to increase the number of muscle fibres recruited, which can in turn help develop the athlete's strength over time. Reflexively, massage directly or indirectly affects the nervous system. By encouraging relaxation, massage increases the production of endorphins, natural painkillers and mood elevators that create a sense of well-being. In this way, massage may provide psychological benefits that could give the athlete a competitive edge.

The effects of massage can be evaluated both physiologically and psychologically. Evidence supports some of the currently held beliefs, but not enough research has been done to substantiate all of the claims that have been made. As therapists, we obviously believe in the benefits of massage. This belief is a result of historical clinical experience, objective reports and testimonials rather than scientific studies. It is generally believed that the following are some of the effects that massage can have on the body as a whole.

- *Muscular system:* Sports massage can release soft tissue tension, relieve stiffness, decrease muscle spasms, release restrictions and soften and realign scar tissue and loosen up adhesions, helping to restore optimal function.
- *Skeletal system:* By releasing tension and restrictions in soft tissue, it can help to reestablish a balance in muscle function where needed and increase mobility and flexibility, thus reducing the stress on joints.
- *Cardiovascular system:* By increasing blood flow, sports massage brings more oxygen and nutrients to tissue and removes waste products, thus promoting an efficient system.

- *Nervous system:* Massage can stimulate a variety of sensory receptors, depending on the techniques used, to either stimulate or soothe nerves. It can also reduce pain as a result of endorphin release.
- *Lymphatic system:* In general terms massage can help the immune system by promoting fluid movement through the tissue, thus assisting with the elimination of toxins. It is also said to increase white blood cell count to help the body fight disease.
- *Digestive system:* By stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system, sports massage increases digestive movement through peristalsis, thus helping to relieve constipation, colic and gas.
- *Urinary system:* By increasing circulation and stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system, massage improves elimination.

Where Can Sports Massage Take Place?

Sports massage does not require a designated space or need any equipment. You need only your hands and skills to deliver effective massages. At sporting events you can offer pre-event, intra-event and post-event massages. You can offer massages in public places to educate both athletes and non-athletes about the benefits of sports massage in performance and recovery. Sports massage can also be delivered in more formal settings such as multidisciplinary medical centres and health care centres.

Many sports massage therapists set up practices in designated rooms in their homes or provide mobile service. Others offer on-site treatments at offices. Sports massage can be performed almost anywhere—on the floor, at the side of the playing field or in a chair in someone's front room. A broad range of techniques are available, thus allowing you to work with or without lubricant, directly on skin or through clothing. Sports massage is versatile and can fulfill a wide range of needs in a multitude of situations.

When Should Sports Massage Take Place?

Typically, sports massage is used in pre-, intra- and post-event work, as well as being a part of a good training regime (maintenance massage). The duration can be as short as 5 minutes or as lengthy as an hour and a half. (If a massage lasts longer than this, the body can get overloaded, potentially defeating the purpose.) With additional remedial training, you can use sports massage in rehabilitation programs. It can be used in a number of settings such as a hospital or clinic, as part of a physiotherapy treatment or on its own.

When performing sports massage in a pre-event or intra-event situation, be cautious. Unless you have the appropriate skills and adequate knowledge about your client, it is best to leave any deeper or specific work to maintenance massages.

Post-event massage is generally used to return the tissue to its pre-event state; it works with the lymphatic system to flush and aid in normalising tissue. Post-event work can also be an opportunity to assess for any injuries and take the necessary action to ensure a full recovery. Post-event massages are generally gentler and shorter than maintenance sessions. The extent of the massage depends on the type of event; for example, after a marathon, tissues will be tired and lack energy and will not tolerate a vigorous or lengthy massage. Further discussion about event work is given in chapter 10.

Outside of event work, sports massage is for anyone, active or inactive. This form of massage, although it has the word *sport* attached to it, can be suitable for anyone with an interest in soft tissue work who can appreciate the possibilities it has to offer.

CLIENT TALK

When people hear about what you do, many want to talk about their own soft tissue complaints. In situations such as these, you have an opportunity to educate about sports massage and what it can and cannot do. You can also apply some massage through clothing to give the person a feel for your technique. As long as you act responsibly, consider contraindications and do not treat any conditions without doing a full assessment, your hands can act as an advertising and educational tool. Be careful not to give advice until you have taken a full assessment and case history.

Benefits of Sports Massage

The big question is, How does sports massage relate to the real world? How can massage affect an athlete's performance or everyday activity? Whether tension is due to a sporting activity or a job, it can be effectively dealt with through massage. How can you explain this and the possible benefits of massage to prospective clients in a way that will encourage them to include it as an essential part of their lives?

Situation: A swimmer has approached you and asked if you can help him. He has very tight shoulders and is starting to get a bit of lower back discomfort. He also believes his training is not going the way he wants it to despite the time and effort he is putting into it. As a result, he is becoming discouraged about the lack of progress. Your response might go something like this:

'There might be a soft tissue reason for the lack of progress, and a potential one is that you are not necessarily using your muscles efficiently. Sports massage is not just about the feel-good factor; it also addresses how to best maintain optimal performance and prevent injury. We do this by using a multitude of techniques that help muscles perform optimally so they are ready for the demands of sport. By the description you have given, it sounds as though you might have developed some muscle imbalances. We will look at this and determine whether you are creating a high demand for some muscles and not enough for others.

Massage will also increase your awareness through touch. It will show you where your areas of soreness, tension and weakness are. As a result, it will help you to understand how your muscles are behaving and therefore how you might need to adjust your training.

For instance, if the muscles such as the upper trapezius have been overdeveloped and are very short and tight, this will lead to a decrease in the range of motion available to the shoulder. This will have a knock-on effect on the other muscles, inhibiting the other structures and decreasing their ability to assist and support the movement.

This will lead to less available power in the stroke because the full potential of the muscle structures is not being used. Massage will help to keep the fibres lengthened and encourage strong mobile tension in the tissue, developing a more balanced and functional movement.

By keeping the tissues more mobile and not allowing them to stiffen up, massage also encourages the exchange of nutrients and waste products, thereby keeping the tissues healthy. Including sports massage in your training can improve your performance and keep you injury free. I would recommend that you use massage along with your cardiovascular, strength and flexibility training.'

Benefits of Sports Massage

- Greater flexibility and range of motion
- Increased usage of available muscle
- Improved performance
- Improved self-awareness
- Fine-tuning of training
- Functional muscle balance
- Improved fluid movement
- Pain reduction
- Appropriate psychological stimulation (e.g., alertness, clarity, relaxation)
- Greater energy
- Improved recovery
- Injury prevention

Closing Remarks

Sports massage is about treating and meeting the needs of people regardless of whether they are athletes. Anyone who has a soft tissue condition or wants to improve his general well-being or health can benefit from sports massage. As a sports massage therapist, you have a lot to offer, but remember that your work is about meeting the needs of your clients. If that requires that you work alongside other therapies, it is important to be open to these other possibilities. Always consider whether the condition is within your remit of experience and understanding. If not, it is best to seek advice or refer.

Quick Questions

1. Who should be treated with sports massage?
2. How does massage affect the muscular system?
3. When can sports massage take place?
4. What is the main focus of sports massage?
5. What skills do you need as a sports massage therapist?

Contraindications for Sports Massage

In this chapter you will learn the difference between global (sometimes referred to as general) and local contraindications for sports massage as well as the conditions that require application modifications rather than the restriction of massage. To support your understanding of this topic, the Pathology section gives a brief description of common conditions that you might encounter in your practice and some practical approaches about how to modify your massage to accommodate the physiological changes.

Contraindications

Splitting the word *contraindications* offers some insight into its meaning. *Contra* means 'against', as in 'contrary', and *indications* address what can be done. Therefore, contraindications are conditions that prevent you from continuing. Contraindications are not necessarily absolute. Some situations, referred to as general contraindications, prevent you from applying any form of massage. In the case of local contraindications, you need to avoid specific areas, but you can apply massage elsewhere. Lastly, in some circumstances you will need to make changes or modify your techniques to accommodate the physiological changes in the soft tissue. Adjustments that need to be made as a result of a disease process or condition are classified as modifications.

CLIENT TALK

It is important to have a mentor in your life as a therapist, someone to bounce ideas off of and to help develop your confidence. On numerous occasions my students have come with their clients to seek advice and watch me assess them. I usually give some treatment, but more important, I spend time explaining what I have found and give suggestions as to how they can take over and treat. It can be daunting when you first start working on your own. It is important to feel that you can get reassurances and ask for advice when it is warranted.

Global Contraindications

Global contraindications are conditions that prevent the application of massage globally. The following key words can help you remember all of the conditions in this category: *severe, acute, contagious, uncontrolled* and *undiagnosed*. Although this list is not all encompassing, it will help you determine whether you need to make alternative arrangements such as referring to another health care professional, administering first aid treatment or doing nothing until the situation has changed. Following is a list of some of the most common conditions that are global contraindications:

Alcohol and recreational drugs, such as just having had a glass of wine	Peritonitis
Atherosclerosis	Phlebitis
Arteriosclerosis	Recent surgery
Acute hypo- or hyperthermia	Severe haemophilia
Acute injuries (first aid required)	Severe oedema
Contagious illnesses such as flus and colds	Severe sports injuries
Compartment syndrome	Severe pain
Deep vein thrombosis	Shock
Heart disease	Strong medications
Inoculations (wait 24 hours)	Tumours
	Uncontrolled hypertension
	Undiagnosed lumps

Local Contraindications

Unlike global contraindications, local contraindications allow you to proceed with massage but away from the affected area. Always ensure that what you are doing does not adversely affect the healing process. For example, if your client has a fractured fibula, your considerations should include how to position your client, the choice of techniques and where you should massage so as not to affect the knitting process of the bones. Here is a list of some of the most common conditions that are local contraindications:

Bruises	Hernias	Metal pins and plates
Contusions	Open wounds	Myositis ossificans
Dermatitis	Radiation	Pacemaker
Folliculitis	Severe varicose veins	Tumours
Fractures	Sunburns	Undiagnosed skin disorders
Fungal infections	Melanoma (skin cancer)	Verrucas

Modifications

Modifications require an awareness and understanding of the condition before proceeding. When clients present with underlying conditions, you need to determine how to change your approach to treatment.

To give a safe and effective treatment, you must consider your plan of action prior to the start of the session. At some point during the session, you might need to consider modifications to some or all the following: the choice of technique; whether to work specifically or generally, or superficially or deeply; the direction and speed of the movement; the duration of the massage; the stage of tissue healing; and the positioning of the client.

Consider a client who presents with plantar fasciitis (fascia that is inflamed underneath the foot) as the primary reason for the visit, but also has diabetes mellitus as an underlying issue. You will first need to understand the nature of diabetes before determining how to approach your treatment for the secondary condition. One of the complications of diabetes is that the client can have peripheral neuropathies that can lead to decreased sensation in the feet. Without this knowledge, you may use massage techniques that are too aggressive, unintentionally inflicting more damage to the tissues rather than aiding in the healing process of the plantar fasciitis. In this circumstance deeper techniques such as friction should be avoided; a broader, more superficial soft tissue release stroke in conjunction with stretching techniques farther up the calf would be a safer option to aid in the release of the tension under the foot.

Whenever you are working with diseases or abnormal soft tissue conditions, knowledge about the condition is essential to make the correct modifications to perform safe and effective massage. Always consider that you may need further consultation with a health care practitioner or a doctor's written permission before proceeding with treatment. Following are more examples of conditions that would require massage modification:

Asthma	Frozen shoulder	Osteoporosis
Cancer	Minor surgery	Rheumatoid arthritis
Diabetes	Osteoarthritis	Whiplash

The next section, Pathology, discusses these conditions in more depth.

TIP If you are unsure about any condition that a client presents with, treat it as a contraindication until you obtain the knowledge you need to proceed in a safe manner for both yourself and the client.

Pathology

Understanding the physiological effects of disease and soft tissue conditions is essential in planning an appropriate treatment. As a therapist, you will encounter a wide range of health issues, and the key to choosing the safest and most effective method for each one will be your knowledge of the condition. As discussed in the Modifications section, some general rules and considerations will enable you to deal with your client's needs. These include the choice of technique, the depth of application, the direction of movement, the duration of the massage, the stage of tissue healing and the positioning of the client.

It is not the intention of this book to give an in-depth explanation of each condition, but rather, a rudimentary explanation of each condition and some guidelines