

What is Soft Tissue Therapy?

by Shannon Myers, MS



A healthy way to mitigate stiffness, tightness or pain in your body and joints, is not just through movement, but with soft tissue therapy. Our bodies tend to stiffen as we age due to injuries, misuse, disuse, overuse, stress, etc., but a lot can be controlled through a regular input of force. Prescriptions and surgery can compound the issue. Think of our tissues as being alive. The cells of our muscles, ligaments, tendons, joint capsules, fascia (connective tissue), etc. are constantly regenerating at every age and adapting to their environment.

The only language they understand is the input of mechanical force (and chemical taste). If we don't communicate to the body via force (internal or external load) to direct cellular regeneration our soft tissues adapt haphazardly, effecting tissue translation, hydration and circulation. It's true that what we don't use we lose. Ignoring our tissues or resting too long equates to deterioration. Ever been sick for a stint or get back from a long vacation and feel as stiff as a 2 x 4 or feel weak because you atrophied

Healthy tissues are supple, elastic, extensible and hydrated. The most abundant biological fabric within the soft tissue continuum is our fascia. It's so extensive that if you were to lose all your inside structures your body would still retain its shape. It surrounds every muscle, organ, nerve, artery, vein and bone, binding some structures and allowing others to slide and glide. This fascial net is our internal system of flexible support and protection. It's designed to help us move freely and efficiently, giving us strength and shape and the spring in our step. It's the framework that organizes our structures into their own place and space connecting everything together as a whole from head to toe and from skin to bone.

To visualize the fascial net, imagine the peel of an orange as analogous to your skin. The thick, white, fibrous layer that lies underneath is like the fascia underneath our skin. It's the most superficial layer that encapsulates the entire body like a stocking. The triangle compartments of pulp represent the deeper penetrating fascia along with the individual envelopes over each juicy pulp. The tissues of the orange shape and organize its architecture and holds the orange together as a whole. We can use this simple analogy to compare its organization to the inside of our leg.





If you were to look inside the top of a leg, as if to look inside a long cylinder, the organization is reminiscent to that of the orange analogy. Our fascial net penetrates and separates muscles and structures into their designated compartments, sacks and envelopes and it's continuous with one type of tissue blending into the next connecting everything inside together as a whole. It's a continuous bio-flow and our bones are the scaffolding. So, it's not too crazy to imagine your right hip as being fascially connected and effected by your left shoulder, because it is...connected.

We shape and mold all of our tissues based on how we use them in life and the injuries, misuse, disuse, etc. are a part of the adaptation process. It's like we are potters molding clay on a potter's wheel, but over time this can lead to stiffness, tightness and pain. Our tissues respond to injury, chronic tension and habitual movement patterns by shortening from both the forces of gravity and the mechanical forces of habitual movement patterns. When they shorten, thicken and become glue-like, they lose their slide and glide and lock in less than optimal patterns of strain, creating pockets of aberrant tension within the soft tissue continuum and compression at the joints.

Soft tissue therapy is a form of external force to systematically reorganize, restore and balance the tensional integrity of the fascial net. It creates an environment for tissues and joints to heal which is a healthy first line of defense before injections or going under the knife. It can help with anything from joints to back pain, from headaches to plantar fasciitis, from rehab to sports performance.

Benefits of Soft Tissue Therapy

- increase flexibility and ease of movement
- release chronic pain, tension and stress
- improve posture
- improve athletic performance
- enhance physical performance
- enhance neurological functioning and balance
- enhance body awareness
- relax and calm the nervous system
- increase energy and vitality

Soft tissue therapy can address your need locally or you can approach a specific need globally with Structural Integration. Structural Integration is 10 sessions of soft tissue work, addressing the entire body and cause. Please contact Shannon Myers or schedule a consultation with the information below.

Shannon Myers, MS
Movement Specialist & Manual Therapist
shannon@athleticmovementclub.com

