

Myofascial Release

What is fascia?

Fascia is a layer of connective tissue that surrounds every muscle, bone, blood vessel, nerve, and organ in the body. It is connected, head-to-toe, without interruption. Every part in the body is connected to every other part by fascia. These connections are like yarn in a sweater. When one connection gets tight, it pulls on the rest of the sweater--the rest of the body.

Normal fascia is relaxed. It stretches and moves easily. An injury to your body, scars, and inflammation can cause the fascia to become tight. Areas of tightness, called fascial restrictions, can increase pressure on other body parts. This pressure can cause a wide range of symptoms including headaches, neck and back pain, decreased ability to move, and decreased flexibility and stability.

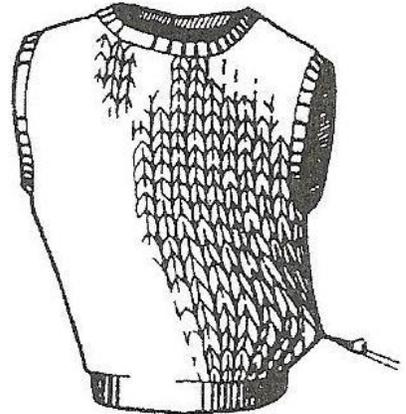


Image courtesy of John F. Barnes, P.T.,
<http://myofascialrelease.com/>

What is Myofascial Release?

Myofascial Release is a hands-on therapy that uses gentle pressure held over time on areas of tightness. Myofascial Release frees these restrictions, decreasing pain and increasing movement.

How is Myofascial Release different from other forms of bodywork?

There are many different types and styles of Myofascial Release. This handout focuses on the John F. Barnes (JFB) Myofascial Release technique. JFB Myofascial Release is unique because pressure is held on areas of tightness for a longer length of time. Continued gentle pressure lets tension in the tissue release when it is ready. This is different from other forms of bodywork, such as trigger point therapy or myofascial physical therapy, where shorter periods of pressure are applied to areas of tightness. Myofascial Release can be used along with other forms of bodywork to improve your symptoms.

What is a Myofascial Release session like?

Your Myofascial Release provider may start by looking at your posture as you stand to determine areas of tension. S/he may also watch you walk. You will then lie on the table. Myofascial Release involves direct hand-to-skin contact. Men can wear shorts or swim trunks, and women, shorts and a sports bra or a two-piece bathing suit. Your therapist will generally approach your body slowly and gently. S/he will use a gentle, firm pressure that is held for period of time to release areas of fascial tension. You may feel a body part move as the tissue releases. This movement of body parts is called "unwinding."

A session is usually around 60 minutes long. It may be helpful to have several Myofascial Release treatments in order to make lasting changes. You may ask questions during your session. If at any time you become uncomfortable and want your therapist to stop, you may ask him/her to do so.

Your therapist may also teach you some ways to treat yourself. This can help create lasting changes.

PATIENT HANDOUT



Myofascial Release

What are the benefits?

Myofascial Release can improve your health and well-being in several ways. You may have an increased ability to move, improved sense of well-being, and less pain, tension, stress, and anxiety.

Myofascial Release can help with many conditions, including:

- Headaches and migraines
- Chronic (long-lasting) fatigue
- Neck pain and whiplash
- Back pain
- Chronic (long-lasting) pain
- Myofascial pain syndrome and fibromyalgia
- Scoliosis
- Pelvic pain
- Temporomandibular joint (TMJ) syndrome (jaw pain)

Who should receive Myofascial Release?

Myofascial Release can be done on anyone, including infants and children.

Are there any side effects?

Myofascial release is safe for all ages. It can be used along with traditional medical care. Your body may feel sore after a treatment, and sometimes symptoms may be worse for a short period. These are normal responses to releasing tension in the body. They are signs that things are changing.

How can I find a Myofascial Release practitioner?

- You can check the National Myofascial Release therapist database: <http://mfrtherapists.com/> to see if a therapist trained in this method is in your area.
- You can contact massage therapists and physical therapists directly and ask if they are trained in the John F. Barnes (JFB) Myofascial Release technique.

References:

1. Barnes JF. Myofascial Release: The Search for Excellence. Paoli, Pa: MFR Seminars; 1990
2. Barnes JF. Myofascial release the missing link in traditional treatment. In: Davis CM. Complementary Therapies in Rehabilitation. 2nd ed. Thorofare, NJ: SLACK Inc; 2004:59-81.
3. Garfin SR, Tipton CM, Mubarack SJ, et al. Role of fascia in maintenance of muscle tension and pressure. J Appl Physiol. 1981;51(2):317-320.

The information in this handout is for general education. It is not meant to be used by a patient alone. Please work with your health care practitioner to use this information in the best way possible to promote your health.

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