

Sports Massage for Athletes in Training

By Heather Piper, LMT

Massage Therapy, more importantly Sports Massage, is one of the most important parts of your training. It is a session designed for you and only you, targeted to your body and the event or events that you will be participating. Whether you run a 5K, a triathlon, or a series of events over the season, it should be considered an important part of your training.

The benefits of Sports Massage are many; so many they would fill this entire magazine! As massage therapists, some of our goals for athletes are improved flexibility, reduced fatigue, improved endurance, injury prevention, and preparing the body and mind for optimal performance. Any of these are marvelous reasons to get a massage. The massage is really about you and your training.

Anything that keeps you competitive and allows you to stay on your training schedule is reason enough to recommend Sports Massage. Your muscles and body need time to recover; massage can help to reduce recovery time. This type of massage is not about pampering. As therapists, we are working together as an integral part of your training. We have the hands on time. We see tension patterns. We see your gait and posture. We are working with you to correct or reduce issues, allowing you to work at your peak potential. Additionally, we assist your body in the recovery from long training days and the event itself.

During your training there are different types of massage that your therapist will employ to either rehabilitate an injury or assist you while you are putting in the maximum level of work to be competitive. This may change from appointment to appointment. It is critical to receive massage a minimum of once a month while training. More often if needed. If you talk to your favorite massage therapist they will be more than helpful and do offer some "frequent flyer" discounts if needed. It is your body after all, what goes in should be the best quality, so it is also a good idea to take care of it from the outside.

It's always a good idea to get a massage up to five days prior to the event itself, even the day of the event. This type of massage does not address last minute issues; it's mainly used to get you ready mentally. We are not trying to change things in your body at this time. Changes happen during your off season training. Massage helps with last minute prep, loosening tight muscles and assisting in your warm up. Your pre-event massage at the event can also help you have a great event.

The intent of post-event massage is about getting your body back to a resting state. A massage right after finishing your event and up to five days after is to flush your body and reduce soreness.

I am sure that you have felt the day after soreness. It doesn't have to be this way. The very first option is to get in line at the finish line. Those therapists at the event know how to take care of you and your body. Let them help you. It can make your ride home and the week back at the office bearable, until you can get to your favorite therapist of course!

Remember, this process continues after your event, with massage during the season and throughout your off season training. While you are continuing to exercise, massage can keep you healthy throughout the year. How about keeping you healthy through the next long winter, or simply allowing you to put in those long miles on the bike or on the road?

Heather Piper is the owner and primary Muscular Therapist at River Bend Therapeutic Massage in Kennebunk Maine. She has worked at two well-known spas, The White Barn Inn, and the Cliff House Resort & Spa; she had worked with athletes and performers all over New England. She is licensed to practice massage in Maine and Massachusetts. She has a keen knowledge of anatomy and kinesiology. Heather uses her skills to assist the client's return to physical health. She can be reached via email: heather@ksystems.us, or at her website: riverbendtherapeuticmassage.massagetherapy.com. See ad on page 21.



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