

Massage - Yes You Do Need It!

By John Roddy

If you're one of the lucky few whose genetics allow you to train almost every day with no more pain than the usual 1-2 days of "good" soreness that comes after an intense workout, then this article is not for you.

However, if you force yourself through your workouts - or even miss an occasional workout due to nagging soreness or tight muscles - then please read on. I'll give you four good reasons why massage could be the answer you're looking for to help you continue to push harder and get better results from each successive workout.

The relaxed state encourages growth and good health

The most obvious benefit of massage is the relaxation effect. Having the sore muscles massaged allows you to relax and sleep better at night. You've probably realized how difficult it is to fight the cravings for bad food the day after getting too little sleep. So getting quality sleep should be as high a priority as your workout and diet.

Scar tissue is holding you back

As bodybuilders or fitness enthusiasts, we are continually on a mission to make our muscles work as hard as they possibly can. During our mission we sometimes (if we're doing it right!) create small micro tears in the muscle tissue. These tears then must heal before the muscle can function optimally again. If the tears are not allowed to heal properly, the result can be the formation of scar tissue. Think of the occurring muscle tear as analogous to getting a paper cut between the fingers of your hand. If you continue to use the injured hand, you feel pain and slow down the healing process. Scar tissue causes the muscle to function less efficiently and become weaker over time. The more scar tissue you allow to build up, the weaker your muscle gets. Massage can assist the muscle tear to heal normally (and grow!), without forming scar tissue, by breaking up the adhesions that may occur during the healing process.

Get rid of waste

Everybody has a circulatory system made up of veins, arteries and blood with a heart to push the blood through the blood vessels. We also have a lymphatic system filled with lymphatic fluid. The lymphatic system works with the circulatory system as a drainage network to remove wastes released by body tissues, so it is important to keep both of these systems working efficiently if you expect to be able to perform your best. The problem with the lymphatic system is that there is no pump, like a heart, to push the lymphatic fluid along. The lymphatic fluid relies on exercise and the compressive strokes of massage to continue flowing. Many of us who sit at computers all day get very little lymphatic system stimulation which makes the removal of wastes very slow.

Create an environment to allow for growth

Another reason to consider massage is that it can expand the fascial sheaths which contain and support the muscles, organs and bones. When the fascia is too tight, the muscles have no room to grow. Just as your body grew and you needed to get bigger shirts to fit you, you need to make sure the fascia will stretch and grow to accommodate your growing muscles.

Different types of massage will address the different types of problems your body has as a hard working, muscle-building machine. If you have an infection or some kind of circulatory or immune system disease, make sure you ask your doctor first and tell your massage therapist about your condition. Your massage therapist will be able to discuss any concerns you may have. Also, don't use any drugs or alcohol immediately prior to the massage as the increased circulation can speed

up the affects of anything in your bloodstream.

Now that you realize how massage can benefit your training, you need to start the process of finding a qualified therapist in your area to meet your needs. Look for someone who does deep tissue, myofascial and/or sports massage at a minimum. Massage therapists vary greatly in ability and personality. It is very important that you feel comfortable with the therapist you choose. If you do not find a therapist you're comfortable with right away, go back to the list and pick another therapist until you find one you like. I would encourage you to try two or three therapists anyway just to get a feel for the different styles. Your privacy will always be respected. You only undress to the level at which you are comfortable and you will always have a sheet covering any body part that is not being massaged. If this is not the case, then you are not going to a reputable massage therapist. Do yourself a favor. Don't spend too much time thinking about it. Make the appointment and see how it helps your recovery from one workout to the next.