



Staying in Touch®

Spring is nearly here!

As you increase your activity levels this spring, be sure to take it nice and easy until you get those well-rested muscles back in shape.

Sore, overworked muscles are one of the main reasons folks schedule their next massage. But how much of your discomfort comes from your muscles? What role does your fascia play? How does stress affect fascia?

This month's issue focuses on fascia and its effects on your health. The excerpts from these on-line articles touch on a few of the basic facts on fascia and should give you an overview of how important fascia is to your overall health.

Since all of your muscles are surrounded by fascia, it's important to consider fascia's contribution to your body's proper function.

Read on to learn more about fascia and how it can affect your health. If you have questions regarding fascia, be sure to ask at your next appointment.

Keep making massage a healthy priority in your life; see you soon for your next appointment!

Everywhere in your body is tissue called fascia . . .

By Rachel Damiani and Ted Spiker

Americans, who spend about \$8 billion a year in massage and chiropractic treatments to relieve pain, may have no idea that they're all probably experiencing the same thing—a manipulation of their fascia, a three-tiered layer of tissue that encases tissues and organs.

Although some people may have a vague notion that fascia exists, they probably don't know much about their fascia—or understand why it even matters.

Fascia is the only tissue that modifies its consistency when under stress. It's everywhere in the body, so it could affect just about everything. That leaves researchers wrestling with an intriguing dilemma: If fascia is everywhere, then how do you isolate its impact on the body?

Early research suggests it may have relevance in areas one wouldn't normally think of fascia playing a role, such as digestive conditions and cancer.

"Fascia is what holds us together. There are very few diseases that don't have a fascia component," said Frederick Grinnell, a professor of cell biology at the UT Southwestern Medical School.

In an article in the *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*, researchers make the point that this web throughout our body has the potential to influence everything.

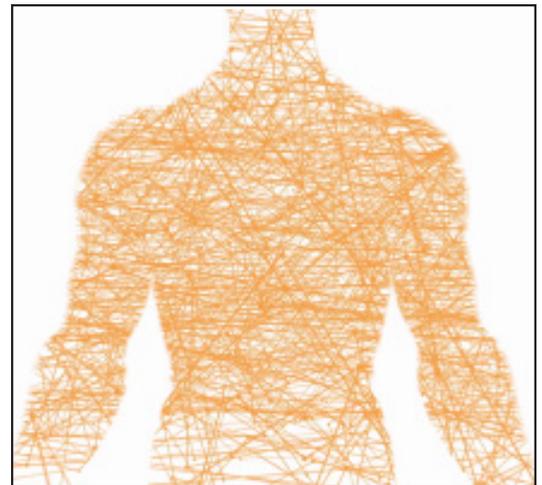
"Fascia is involved almost everywhere in the body," said Andreas Haas, the founder of the Manus Training Center and the Manus Fascia Center in Austria who has been a manual therapist for 30 years and looking at fascia for two decades. "Each organ, each muscle, each artery, each vein, each nerve—there is not one single structure in the whole body that is not connected with fascia or not enveloped by fascia."

What is fascia?

There's fascia that appears all over and acts like a casing—a biological *Spanx* of sorts. This fascia throughout the body holds muscles and organs in place to make sure they don't jostle around.

The characteristic of fascia that is at the forefront of discussion in terms of health implications is its elasticity—that is, higher elasticity of the fascia allows organs and

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Fascia ...

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tissues to function better, while stiffer fascia decreases performance.

Long thought of as just the support structure, fascia may have more influence on health than as a passive container.

Why does it matter?

Fascia's main functions are helping coordinate the body's movements, position in space, and fluid flow throughout the body.

Beyond movement conditions, fascia may also be involved in a variety of unexpected health conditions and diseases, including cancer, lymphedema, and gastrointestinal distress.

By releasing fascia through bodywork, it could be possible that fascia becomes more pliable, lymphatic fluid flow increases and swelling goes down. Similarly, releasing fascia could help reduce gastrointestinal distress, including constipation, bloating and acid reflux.

Source: www.washingtonpost.com

More on fascia and your health

Fascia is the connective tissue that forms a matrix of support around the body and within every layer of the body from our muscles and bones to our muscle cells.

"Fascia surrounds every muscle, every bundle within muscles, groups of muscles, it surrounds every nerve, every artery, every vein, all the lymph vessels. These are all embedded in envelopes of fascial tissue. Fascia also forms large envelopes around the whole body," says Til Luchau, author of *Advanced Myofascial Techniques*.

Magnified under a microscope, fascia looks like spider webs. It has six times more sensory nerve endings than muscle. Like many other systems of the body, fascia is adaptive and responds to stress both externally (environment) and internally (within the body).

Years ago, fascia was regarded as packing material within the body and thrown out by anatomists during cadaver dissections. The more accepted belief today is fascia is its own system. Medical research and tests are lagging behind, evident in that fascia does not show up on MRI scans, CT scans or X-Rays. Many experts believe that fascia is the missing piece of the puzzle to chronic pain and illness.

Source: Aiyana Fraley at www.massagemag.com



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The time to relax is when you don't have time for it.

—Sydney J. Harris

The content of this newsletter is not intended to replace professional medical advice. If you're ill, please consult a physician.
