



HIGH PERFORMANCE

SPORTS MEDICINE

How to incorporate Massage Therapy into your training schedule and around your competitions

Training that culminates in a particular goal, such as a 5K race, half-marathon or triathlon will usually be created using a system called periodization. The training schedule will be broken down into blocks of time allowing for safe, gradual increases in frequency, intensity and time coupled with adequate rest. A schedule like this provides the perfect opportunity to work massage into your training to optimize your recovery and performance.

If you were to look at a graph of this type of training it would look a bit like someone taking two or three steps forward and one step back. The step back is sometimes referred to as a 'rest week' or 'recovery week'. For two or three weeks the duration and intensity of the training will build and then it will decrease slightly for one week. During this time of slightly reduced activity your body is given the opportunity to repair itself and you are given the chance to mentally recover from two or three weeks of hard work. This recovery week is a perfect time to schedule your regular massage therapy treatments for a few reasons:

- + You will have an easier time working it into your schedule because your total training time is reduced leaving you some free time
- + You will not be trying to juggle your massage appointment around tougher, high intensity workouts
- + Because the focus of the week is recovery and repair you are committed to accomplishing the task.

Take a look at your training schedule in its entirety and schedule your massage therapy appointments in advance into those recovery weeks. Booking ahead ensures that you get days and times that work for you!

Is there a time when I should not get a massage during training?

Yes, and no. It is not a good idea to get a massage on the day you have a difficult training session or right before a race. If you always do your track workout or tempo run on Wednesdays, avoid scheduling a massage on that day. If you often find yourself a little sore the day after a massage, keep that in mind as well. If you find yourself with some nagging aches and pains, however, it is best to take an appointment when you can get it. Prior to receiving any massage let your therapist know where you are in your training and techniques can be adjusted so as not to interfere with planned workouts.

What about massage before and after race day?

With respect to timing, here are some guidelines:

- + Schedule your last massage appointment no closer than two or three days before the event
- + Schedule your post event massage for three days after the event

The type of massage to receive before and after competition can vary depending on how you feel. Periodized training schedules will end with what is called a 'taper'. This is a one to three week reduction in training volume leading up to competition to allow the body to be fully rested. The taper is as much an art as a science and different people react to it differently. If you find yourself tense, anxious or on edge during your taper then a full body swedish massage for relaxation can help take the edge off. If you are prone to pre-event nervousness and/or do not sleep well the night before competition then a relaxation massage 48 hours before an event can help you get a good night's sleep.

Others find the reduced volume of the taper leaves them feeling heavy and sluggish. In this case a massage that utilizes faster rate techniques designed to stimulate muscles may reduce these feelings of fatigue.

The prevailing theory behind post-race massage used to be that it would aid lactic acid removal from muscles and therefore promote recovery and leave you feeling less stiff and sore. More current research suggests that lactic acid is not to blame for sore muscles and that immediate post exercise massage may actually delay blood flow to muscles and therefore delay lactic acid clearance. So feel free to skip the onsite massage offered at most events!

A few days after the event your muscles may still be tender and not up to being compressed and pushed. Do not let this deter you from visiting a registered massage therapist. Massage is not always about direct pressure applied to muscle. Running requires the body to carry out repetitive actions with little or no variation in direction, working the same muscles in the same way for a prolonged period of time. In the days following an event what often feels best is a facilitated stretching routine. This allows joints and muscles to be passively moved through all ranges of motion counteracting the stiffness that comes with repetitive motion. The rhythmic nature of this type of massage can also be very relaxing.

During your training, before your race, and after, a skilled massage therapist experienced in working with racing athletes can help her see you through every phase of your journey!

If you think you may have a running related injury or would like to incorporate massage therapy as part of your training regimen, you can book an assessment with our Registered Massage Therapist at High Performance Sports Medicine (HPSM). We are conveniently located at the Yonge Eglinton Centre, 2300 Yonge Street, Suite 1604. For more information regarding our clinic and our approach to treatment please visit www.hpsm.ca. To book an appointment please email hello@hpsm.ca or call 416-486-4776 (HPSM).