

Remedial Massage for Australian Defence Force Members.



As the owner and editor of this Northern Services Courier, I've just finished laying out the page on the recent Special Forces Barrier Testing in Townsville.

It made me cringe just reading the list of physical abilities required to pass even the initial stages for Special Forces selection.

But at the same time, I greatly admire those who have the determination and have worked hard to develop the stamina, skills and talent even to try out for this truly elite Service.

As a fully qualified remedial massage therapist, I treat a number of male and female Defence members, including some who are preparing for battle fitness assessments (BFAs), and their partners.

I also have worked on visiting Special Forces members, including US Navy Seals, who have needed urgent treatment for niggling pain hindering their capabilities for such demanding physical work and alertness.

These members are easily tough enough to be able to handle this pain, but they have sensibly recognised it could result in serious muscle or joint injury if left untreated any longer.

If injury does occur, "Murphy's Law" states it will be at the worst possible time and in the worst possible situation ... not a nice thought, particularly with some Special Forces operations or while on deployment or exercise!

Service members who have regular remedial massages have told me they benefit greatly from these treatments. It's why they keep coming back for more.

As well as removing aches and pains and as a treatment for injuries, massage leads to extra flexibility which in turn leads to extra strength and stamina, particularly for the rigorous physical activities - including sport - of the ADF.

There are also numerous other benefits - too numerous to mention in the space of this article - but among them are extra motivation and

productivity just from feeling much better and more relaxed after a massage.

The non-availability of remedial massage as a free Defence health care provision is one obvious reason more Defence members have not "seen the light" and don't obtain regular treatments. This situation is not likely to change in the short term because the very powerful and financial lobbies dictating overall Government health policies do not accept massage and other natural therapies as legitimate treatments.

This is despite the fact that for some years elite sporting teams and individuals, Olympic athletes, many members of the public, and now many Health Funds, have recognised the treatment, injury and sickness prevention benefits of these therapies.

So it really is up to individual Defence members, if they want to do the right thing by themselves, to seek out a qualified and competent remedial masseur (male) or masseuse (female).

In Townsville, there are many qualified therapists. For those who want to try a massage, here's a few things to consider:

If you just want an occasional remedial massage, say in preparation for a BFA or an important sporting event, or some other heavy physical activity, be sure to have the massage at least several days before the event.

Depending on how tight and inflexible you are, a deep tissue remedial massage can be like a very strenuous physical workout for your muscles. Although they should feel better virtually straight away, the muscles still need time to recover - just like after heavy exercise.

Planning to have a regular massage is even better. You put your bodies through hell on a regular basis. Regular massage will help keep the muscles loose and flexible and get rid of knots.

Don't confuse the term "remedial" massage with "sports" massage. Sports massage is mainly just short pre- or post-competition massages - say 10 to 15 minutes for muscle warm up, warm down and stretching of the main muscles to be used.

Sports massage therapists are usually also qualified in remedial massage and have additional knowledge of injury treatments and more complex stretching.

Remedial massage works deep into muscle tissue to release tight muscles, tone stretched (taut) muscles, increase blood flow, and improve flexibility of muscles and joints.

To do a comprehensive remedial massage on legs, arms, back, shoulders, abdomen, chest and neck could easily take two hours or more. So you may need to allow for more than one treatment if you feel sore in a few or all those areas.

A competent remedial masseur will also consider what muscles are likely to be causing or contributing to where you feel the problem and treat those areas as well.

It makes sense to treat the cause of a problem, not just the symptom.

For example, if you said you had sore backs of legs and a sore back, shoulders and neck, you virtually need a full body massage - front and back - to do a thorough treatment. Anything less is just treating the symptom.

Even though you should notice a difference in tight muscles straight after a massage, you might find the deep tissue work leaves some spots a bit sore the next day.

This may actually impede some strenuous physical activities next day. However, any soreness is only very short term, while the overall benefits of the massage last much longer. That's why it's best to have a massage several days ahead of an important activity like a BFA.

Physical and mental toughness are part of Service life. You are not being a "wuss" or showing weakness if you have a massage for niggling muscular or joint soreness or pain.

Pain is a warning that something is wrong and possibly that serious muscle or joint injury may follow.

Would you rather have a massage or be invalided out of the Services through injury?

How important is your health and fitness? If remedial massage is good enough for elite athletes and sporting teams, shouldn't it also be good enough for you as ADF members who have just as many, if not more, exercise, sporting and other physical demands placed on you on a daily basis?

Try a massage - even if you have to pay for it yourself - and check out the benefits.

If you'd like more information about massage - Swedish, remedial, sports or manual lymphatic drainage - give one of our qualified therapists a call.

