

# Massage is a Key Element to Maintaining Fitness.

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**The military demands physical fitness. When you're fit, you SHOULD feel stronger and be more motivated, energetic, productive and positive.**

To achieve and maintain health and fitness in the ADF, the key elements are regular sport and exercise and stretching during your military PT, in a gym, at home or outdoor locations, together with a nutritious and balanced diet.

Remedial massage should be another VITAL ingredient in the fitness process.

While being fit may make you physically stronger, if your back or legs hurt, your neck is stiff and difficult to turn or if your muscles generally ache like hell, you're unlikely to be able to enjoy the other benefits.

This is especially so for those who regularly play sport, or exercise with weight programs and/or impact activities like running and aerobics to develop muscle strength, tone and stamina.

Remedial (deep tissue) massage helps release muscle tension and tones muscle. In doing so, it can also help prevent injury - particularly on the sports field.

With proper muscle balance on left/right and front/back of the body, loose and flexible muscles do not need to work harder against, or compensate for, opposing tight individual muscles or muscle groups.

For example, when you straighten (extend) your leg by contracting your quadriceps muscles, the (opposing) hamstring muscles must release. If the hamstrings are too tight, the quads have to work harder to straighten the leg, causing muscle stress.

## **Injury Risk.**

In very active sports, particularly contact sports like Rugby Union, AFL or Rugby League and other sports like netball where there is sudden stopping, twisting and change of direction, the risk of injury is much higher when muscles are tight and inflexible.

And always keep in mind that an area you feel either a niggling, severe or constant pain in your muscles or joints may be just a **symptom** caused



by tight, inflexible muscles elsewhere in the body. Remedial massage therapists know where to look for other factors contributing to the pain you feel.

Pain is a **warning** that something is not right.

Ongoing pain is telling you to do something about it. Ignore the warnings at your own risk.

Competent remedial and sports massage therapists also know a range of stretches to improve muscle flexibility to include or recommend with massage treatments.

With the heavy physical exercise and sporting demands on Defence Force members on a daily basis, an occasional or regular deep tissue massage should be an **ESSENTIAL** element of your fitness regime.

When your muscles and joints don't hurt, you will feel better overall. You will be able to make decisions more clearly and be more effective in your daily workplace.

## **Widely Accepted.**

Massage is now a widely accepted way to significantly improve your overall health and is no longer considered a "luxury" (even though it has been used as a healing tool for thousands of years - long before modern medicine).

With major sporting teams and elite athletes, massage is a vital element of their preparation and training and the major health funds, including Defence Health and Naval Health Benefits, also now recognise the benefits.

## **Fitness Assessments.**

In recent years, the introduction by the ADF of regular combat fitness assessments at various levels, with the threat of discharge for those who fail to meet the high standards, has prompted a

number of more enlightened members to privately seek the help of remedial massage therapists. One day the Australian Defence Force may also wake up to the fact that if it is going to penalise members who can't meet the high standards because of muscle or joint problems, it also should be providing all available means to treat or help prevent or minimise the likelihood of these and to help maximise physical performance.

Please note, however, if you're thinking about a massage in preparation for a fitness assessment, it is important not to leave the massage to the last minute. It preferably should be done several days before the assessment.

Deep tissue massage can be like a heavy exercise workout for muscles, depending on how tight or inflexible you are.

The massage will make the muscles more toned and flexible, but a few days may be needed to allow the muscles time to recover, just as they would after a heavy gym workout, and to allow the body to fully adjust to the new flexibility.

One of the modern Defence philosophies is to encourage members to plan ahead, from the day they enter the Services, for the day they will discharge from the ADF and re-enter civvie street.

ADF members should adopt the same philosophy with their bodies. Prepare now for when you will discharge.

### **Tested to Limits.**

While you are in the ADF, your muscles and joints will be exercised, tested and stressed to their limits.

Jumping off trucks with heavy packs, long pack marches, heavy lifts like log and stretcher carries, other Infantry Minor Tactic activities, throwing yourself on the ground while moving forward during an attack on an "enemy," contact sports and many other routine activities place enormous stresses on the muscles and joints.

Regular treatment and maintenance massages now will help ensure the long term adverse effects of these daily stresses are minimised.

This is particularly important for major weight-bearing joints which will be much more susceptible to problems like osteo-arthritis later in life if you have exercised heavily while young.

There are a number of highly qualified and competent remedial and sport massage therapists in Townsville.

If you'd like more information about remedial, Swedish, sport or lymphatic drainage massage, call one of our qualified therapists today.

