Sports massage is the scientific manipulation of soft tissue for injury prevention and therapeutic purposes. It helps restore normal function to the body and to prepare it for athletic activity. This is very important in order to maintain optimal function. Sport and remedial massage treatment combines traditional massage techniques and soft tissue manipulation techniques as follows: Neuromuscular technique, muscle energy technique and soft tissue release.

An insight into sports massage by Hayley Turner

I am currently doing a Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Sport and Remedial Massage at the Oxford School of Sports massage. The course is held once a month over the period of 12 months. The course encompasses the essential skills necessary to treat a variety of musculoskeletal problems ranging from postural dysfunction to sports injuries.

What are the benefits of sports massage?

- Increases circulation
- Removes muscle waste
- Restoring nutrition
- Increases flexibility
- Reduces muscle tension
- Increasing quality and quantity of training
- Early identification of potential injuries
- Preventative treatment
- Training advice
- Improved self-awareness
- Fine tuning training
- Promotes relaxation
- Physical and psychological benefits

How can sports massage help with injuries?

**Minor soft tissue injuries**
- Breaks down scar tissue and adhesions
- Releases excessive muscle tension
- Promotes circulation – improving healing
- Prevents secondary injuries
- Reduces muscle soreness

**Other injuries**
- Reduces associated muscle tension
- Reduces symptomatic pain
- Prevents secondary problems
- Can improve the rate of healing
When is massage appropriate and when it is not?

Massage can be used in pre, inter and post competition. The main aim of sports massage in these stages of competition is to readily prepare the body so that it is performing at its optimum. Sports massage can also be used in general training, injury prevention, injury rehabilitation, post-surgery and post travel with your sports team.

Sports massage has a stigma attached to it that it’s painful, but this shouldn’t always be the case. Massage can have huge psychological and physiological benefits, for those that are stressed and are holding their tension in their neck and shoulders have continual headaches and have poor posture from sitting at a desk all day, massage will help to relieve that tension.

Massage is not appropriate on acute inflammation, open wounds, bone fractures, joint dislocation, deep vein thrombosis and varicose veins, infectious skin disease and colds and fever.

How can massage enhance your performance? Is it just elite athletes that need massage?

Massage improves circulation by dilating blood vessels making them work more efficiently. The manual assistance of encouraging venous blood flow back to the heart enhances blood flow, delivering fresh oxygen and nutrients to the tissues. This improves the removal of waste products and toxins. The increased and enhanced blood circulation helps to relieve muscle tension, reduce soreness therefore a faster recovery.

Massage is NOT just for elite athletes. No matter how active you are massage will be of benefit to you, whether you need massage to reduce your stress, tension or anxiety levels the stimulation of massage will activate your parasympathetic nervous system which will in turn increase dopamine and serotonin levels which are directly linked to stress.