

Understanding Fascia

by Shoshanna Katzman



The fascia of our body is described as “a thin casing of connective tissue that surrounds & holds every organ, blood vessel, bone, nerve fiber and muscle in place.”

Although once thought to be a useless gel-like substance, research is finding how important healthy fascia is for maintaining vibrant and long-lasting health. Interestingly, the three key methods for keeping fascia in good working order are: hydration, massage and conscious movement.

The importance of sipping water throughout the day cannot be emphasized enough to keep your fascia healthy and properly hydrated. Otherwise, the fascia becomes parched, shriveled and unable to deliver its essential role of preserving internal structure. This is oftentimes likened to a sponge that is dry, brittle and hard, versus a wet sponge that is springy and resilient. Moreover, when fascia is dehydrated it doesn't glide well, increasing friction and leading to the release of inflammatory chemicals, production of a glue-like material and greater chance of injury such as a tear or rupture. Therefore, it is a smart idea and quite beneficial to drink lots of fluids to keep one's body in excellent shape.

Self-massage or acupressure is a second key to maintaining healthy fascia as is receiving a therapeutic massage from a licensed bodyworker. A technique known as myo-fascial release specifically targets the connective tissues surrounding and supporting muscles throughout the body. The main goal is to release pain through resolving tension and tight spots known as “trigger points” within the myofascial tissue via massage and stretching techniques – thereby returning to a more pliable and elastic state. Both acupressure and

acupuncture are also effective due to their activation of the deeper level of fascia where meridians (energetic pathways) reside.

The third key involves engaging in mindful movement. Prime examples are the Chinese exercises of Taiji and Qigong due to their slow movements, deep relaxation, and purposeful weight shifting and twisting and turning of the torso. Practitioners are taught to be conscious while gently stretching and elongating their spine along with lifting their crown upward and sinking their tailbone. Working toward gently stretching the palms to draw energy into the hands is another method for activating the fascia underneath the skin. Upon doing so, a practitioner visualizes the skin along with the muscles and tissues underneath it “expanding like a balloon.” Other exercises involve rubbing and tapping various areas of the body to activate these deeper levels of connective tissue.

Keep in mind that throughout the aging process, healthy fascia prevents the body from becoming stiff, dry and brittle. And fascia contains nerves making it highly sensitive with the tendency to tighten up during stressful and emotional times. But you know what to do now to keep your fascia healthy and happy through being vigilant about incorporating daily hydration along with therapeutic massage and conscious movement into your life. This will increase your whole-body connection on a physical, emotional and energetic level and produce a profound ability for whole-body healing.

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