

Why do cyclists need a sports massage?

Anyone who is or has been involved in cycling can appreciate the demands which a rider can be put under. With such prolonged and targeted physical stress, the effects of a long ride can be felt long after you finish. The leg muscles (quadriceps, gastrocnemius, hamstring and glutes) carry the greatest burden, but many of the other muscle groups also suffer, particularly those used in maintaining an effective posture (muscles of the neck and lower back) and those stuck in a shortened position (hip flexor).

In cycling, most injuries occur through overuse, which often builds up unnoticed over a period of time. If treated as a one-off injury, without addressing the root cause of the overuse, a return to cycling in the same way will be likely to produce the same injury again.

How can Sports massage help?

- Increase recovery time: It takes time for the blood circulating through the muscle to remove the muscle waste that accumulates through hard exercise, supply the ingredients necessary to repair any damage fibres, and replenish the nutritional level.

Massage pumps large volumes of blood through the muscles and speeds-up these processes enormously.

- Injury prevention: The massage therapist thoroughly assesses the condition of the tissues and will often identify areas of pain and tension that you did not realise you had. These could be sites of potential overuse injury, which can then be dealt with before they affect training and performance.
- Performance enhancement: By identifying potential problems early it is possible to monitor the effects of training and make vital adjustments to a programme before injury occurs: for example, improving stretching on a particular muscle, or missing out a particular exercise for a few days



Sports massage for cyclists

When to have sports massage?

Pre-event:

Everyone responds differently to massage so it would be good to try out a sports massage when you do not have a big event coming up to know how you respond.

Usually four days before the race one would have had very good deep tissue massage. This gives ample time to get over the heavy legs that can be felt after a massage. You could have a gentle sports massage up until before the event which can help aid circulation into the muscles, improved length and flexibility and helping with preparing for the event.

Post event:

The best time to have a massage is as soon as possible after your hardest session of the week or an event you take part in, ideally on the same day, as any overuse condition is likely to tighten up more overnight, but within the first 48 hours is beneficial. This massage is normally lighter, gentler and works on flushing out waste toxins by again aiding circulation, reducing D.O.M.S and aiding recovery.

You can then have a deeper sports massage approx. 5 days post event. We would not recommend having it any sooner due to the micro muscle damage already cause during long training and events, a deep sports massage could cause more harm than good.

Maintenance:

Maintenance sports massages are highly recommended to anyone participating in moderate to intense exercise on a regular basis. When to schedule regular massages is different from one person to the next and how regular depends on how much you are training, intensity, history of previous injury, cost and your availability.

These massages can be deeper massages working on breaking down scar tissue/adhesions/knots and releasing trigger points and any tightness within the muscle or fascia surrounding the muscle. As tension is released muscles can feel more free and flexible. Deeper sports massages can sometimes bring about short lived soreness but then after leave you feeling great with the sensation of new legs, back or arms.

How does it help?

Massage can bring about physiological effects primarily on the muscular, skeletal, nervous and cardiovascular systems; not to mention the recognised effects already associated with feelings of relaxation.

Effects on the Muscular System

- Relieves tightness, spasms and restrictions in muscle tissue.
- Increases flexibility in the muscles as it promotes relaxation.
- Increases blood circulation, bringing oxygen and nutrients to the muscle which reduces muscle fatigue and soreness.
- Promotes the removal of waste products from the muscle.

Effects on the Skeletal System

- Increase joint mobility by releasing restrictions in the fascia, and by reducing the thickening of the connective tissue.
- Helps to decrease muscular inflammation, break down scar tissue and free adhesions.
- Improves muscle tone and helps to address issues relating to muscular imbalance, reducing the physical stress placed on joints and bones.

Effects on the nervous system

- Stimulates sensory receptors, which can either stimulate or soothe the nerves depending on the techniques utilised.
- Promotes relaxation and stress reduction by stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system.
- Helps to reduce pain by the release of endorphins which are known to elevate the mood.

Psychological Effects

- Helps to promote feelings of well-being and enhance self-esteem.
- Helps to reduce levels of stress and anxiety by relaxing both the body and mind.