# Tape Away Pain

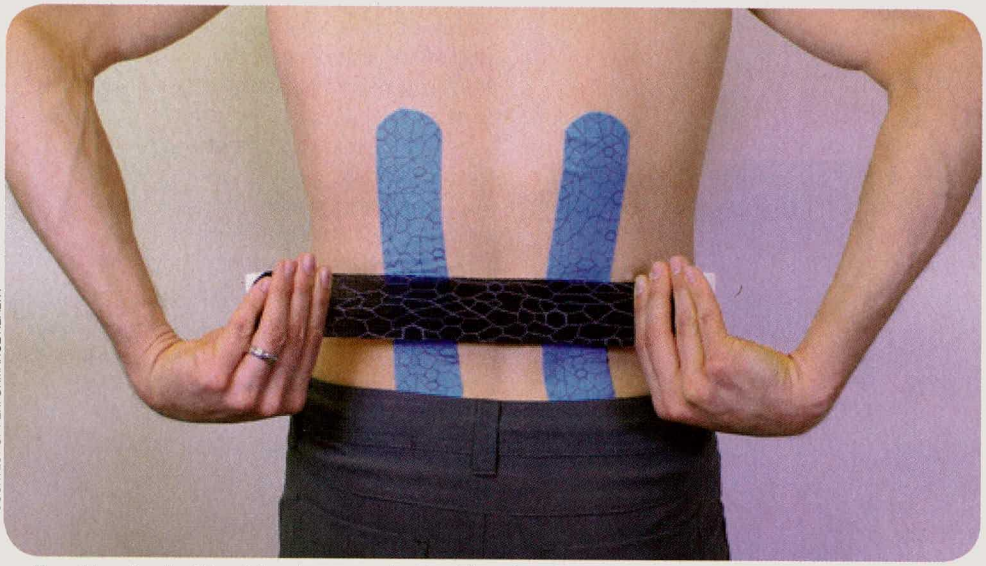
by Lynda Solien-Wolfe, L.M.T., and Ethan Pochman

Kinesiology tape is flexible cotton tape that can be applied with specific tension while allowing the user to maintain range of motion. Wearing the tape reduces pain and provides support to muscles and joints.

Athletes aren't the only ones who ask a lot of their bodies. Providing hands-on therapy, whether you practice Rolfing® Structural Integration or relaxation massage, is physically demanding. It requires a weight transfer up from the floor through the massage therapist's body to the client. For every pound of pressure exerted toward the client, an equal and opposite force is exerted on the massage therapist's body. Research shows massage therapists' bodies are subject to various musculoskeletal disorders of the wrist, elbow, shoulder and low back, as well as acute and chronic pain.

You cannot afford to miss days or weeks of work due to minor musculoskeletal disorders. It is crucial that you develop self-care strategies, and kinesiology tape should be one of them.

Authors of a study published in 2011 in the *European Journal of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine* wrote that kinesio tape "may represent an effective adjunct therapy in the physical rehabilitation program of chronic low back pain patients for immediate and acute pain control." For the study, 39 patients with chronic low-back pain were treated with kinesio tape plus exercise; kinesio tape alone; or exercise alone, for four weeks. Lumbar muscle function, pain and disability were measured before and after treatment. Patients in all three groups showed a significant reduction in pain after treatment; however, only the exercise-alone group experienced reduced disability. Return to normal lumbar muscle function was observed in 28 percent of patients overall.



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*Two strips of vertical kinesiology tape on each side of the spine with minimal stretch in the low back, and one horizontal strip with 50-percent stretch where it hurts the most.*

## Application

There are many possible applications of kinesiology tape. The most common are shoulder, low back, knee, foot and ankle, cervical spine, and elbow, according to a study by Performance Health conducted in 2014.

As you apply the tape, instructions should indicate how much stretch is most appropriate for each application. In the Performance Health study, 84.7 percent of 616 clinicians said measuring the elongation or stretch applied to kinesiology tape is either important or very important.

Measuring will help even beginners apply tape with ease, and it will reduce waste and hassle from re-taping. Throwing away incorrectly applied tape is wasteful, and pulling up tape to reposition it weakens the adhesive.

**Ethan's Favorite Application:** Lower back. Two strips of vertical kinesiology tape on each side of the spine with minimal stretch in the low back, and one horizontal strip with 50-percent stretch where it hurts the most. Works like a charm.

**Lynda's Favorite Application:** Forearms. I use this application when I suffer pain associated with repetitive use. One strip of kinesiology tape on the outside of the arm from the wrist to the elbow, with the wrist flexed; or one strip of kinesiology tape on the inside of the forearm from the wrist to the elbow, with the wrist flexed. Another option is to place a kinesiology tape strip around the wrist just before the joint. I get great relief.

With a little practice, you will become an expert at your favorite applications. Visit www.therabandktape.com after Dec. 1 to watch free application videos and explore a comprehensive database of kinesiology tape research and associated, proven applications.

Lynda Solien-Wolfe is a licensed massage therapist and co-owns a massage therapy clinic in Merritt Island, Florida, where therapists incorporate kinesiology taping in practice. She is the vice president, massage and spa for Performance Health, manufacturer and marketer of Biofreeze®, Bon Vital'®, Thera°Pearl®, Prossage®, TheraBand™ and Cramer® health and wellness products.

Ethan Pochman is an active, over-40 runner and athlete who uses kinesiology tape regularly. He is the vice president and general manager of U.S. clinical business for Performance Health (www.performancehealth.com).

# Heat Up Your Health

by Yarynka Kulyk

As a professional massage therapist, your healthy lifestyle practices likely already include getting regular massage. You can enhance massage's effectiveness and reap added benefits by adding hydrotherapy and heat therapy, in the form of steam-room and sauna use.

For thousands of years, people in cultures worldwide have indulged in heat therapy to relax, support well-being and promote hygiene. Today, saunas, steam rooms and whirlpools are integral to hydrotherapeutic offerings at many spas and health clubs; some even offer specialty services such as salt water whirlpools, eucalyptus saunas and marble steam rooms.

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Use of steam and sauna promotes overall relaxation and helps bring the body to a state of *rest-and-digest*, which is induced by the parasympathetic nervous system when the brain perceives the body is safe from danger or stress. This state brings down levels of survival-and-stress hormones adrenalin and cortisol, and lets healing and regeneration occur. It also allows the body to build immunity, supports elimination and detoxification, and lowers blood pressure. Research studies support the health benefits of sauna use; many such studies are referenced in a 2001 research review in the *American Journal of Medicine*, "Benefits and Risks of Sauna Bathing."

Sweating is one of the body's natural ways of healing and fighting disease. The hot, humid environment of a sauna or steam room induces artificial fever—and while this elevated body temperature does not have the comprehensive germ-fighting effects of a real fever, it produces a striking effect on bodily processes. It slows bacteria and virus growth, and increases the production of white blood cells, the immune system's primary agents; and the rate at which they release into the bloodstream. A 2013 study in the *Journal of Human Kinetics*, "Effect of a single Finnish sauna session on white blood cell profile and cortisol levels in athletes and non-athletes," offers data to support sauna's potential immunity-boosting benefits.

Heat also increases heart rate and speeds up blood circulation, making muscles more pliable and less likely to tear. By increasing muscles' suppleness, heat may help them better respond during a massage therapy session.

Faster circulation stimulates vasodilation of peripheral blood vessels; therefore, when coupled with stretching, heat therapy can accelerate healing of sprains or strains, and reduce stiffness and pain in muscles and joints.

Massage therapists are prone to many job-related health conditions, including repetitive strain injuries such as bursitis and carpal tunnel syndrome; and job stress from uncertain schedules and long days attending to clients. Regular use of heat therapies in a self-care regimen can help you maintain a balanced lifestyle and stay happy, positive and healthy.

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