

Body Innovation helps break down what's causing that mystery back pain

By Jill Anderson

It hurts here...really!

"All of your tests have come back negative, we are not sure why you are experiencing pain but there is nothing we can do to help you at this time."

Is this where you find yourself, feeling like you may be crazy. Friends and family thinking your very real pain may be all in your head?

You're not alone. Over 60% of pain experienced today comes from soft tissue dysfunction. What is soft tissue dysfunction, and is there an effective treatment for the pain it causes?



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Soft tissue dysfunction, problems in the muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves and scar tissues build up over a lifetime. Typically, these problems are not uncovered by traditional tests including MRI's and CAT scans. Doctors may label these mystery pains arthritis or fibromyalgia. Soft tissue dysfunction, when properly treated, can help people avoid surgery or even reduce/eliminate the need for pain medications.

How do you find someone qualified to help you if you think this might be your issue? These types of problems are best addressed by massage therapy. Like the medical profession, massage therapy has general practitioners and specialists. Therapeutic massage practitioners will work on your entire body and are focused on reducing stress. If stress relief and overall tension are your main concern, therapeutic professionals offering relaxation are a good place to start. If your pain is acute, chronic or focused in one area, a specialist may be your best choice. Clinical or medical massage therapists are trained in relieving specific problems and use assessments to identify the cause of a problem. While massage has a variety of methods to address a myriad of soft tissue problems, this article will focus on clinical massage and relief of complex muscular patterns.

An example of clinical work comes from my private practice. Client A was carried into my office by her husband. At age 16 she hurt her back. While she was able to continue working, at times her back would "go out." Sleeping at night was difficult and she would often wake up with lower back pain. When she sat for

long periods of time or rode in a car it would take her a few steps before she could stand upright. Her doctor had given her injections and medications, which were unhelpful. She wasn't ready for surgery and had worked with a Therapeutic Massage therapist but did not get the relief she needed.

Today's "outage" occurred while bending down to help her youngest son tie his shoes. Unable to stand straight and in great pain, her husband helped her onto my table. I suspected the pain in her back was being caused by the psoas, a large muscle in the front of the body. We did some assessments and ruled out nerve issues, structural anomalies (bones in the wrong place), disc pathology, and muscular chain tension (when correlating muscles are overworked). Once I had a better understanding of her situation I was able to test specific muscles. Her psoas was very contracted. When this happens it pulls forward on the vertebrae of the lower back. In response, the back muscle that is attached to those same lumbar vertebrae, the quadratus lumborum, reacted to counterbalance the force. This tug of war was locking down her ability to move freely, so as she went through her day, even small unassuming movements would trigger an "outage".

After her first treatment she was able to get up off the table on her own with a reduction in her pain level. Within 3 sessions she was pain free.

Client A's case is not unusual. Accurate assessment of her issue led to relief. If you are experiencing low back or specific pain related to an area of the body, clinical or medical massage may be helpful. ■



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