



## **FOOTBALL & SPORTS MASSAGE**

Sports massage is an integral process in maintaining good levels of performance within football. Premiership teams such as Manchester United, Tottenham Hotspurs as well as casual players benefit from regular treatment and it has been shown to improve individual and team performance.

A high-quality sports massage can reduce the risk of injury and enhance recovery periods. It can release muscle tension and help to minimise muscle imbalances in the body brought about by the specific movement within the sport. Massage is also essential for the rehabilitation of soft tissue injuries, such as muscular tears.

The physical nature of football leads to potential muscle imbalances, particularly around the hips and hamstrings. As most players have dominance in one leg this creates huge reaction forces that affect the kicking leg, whilst the opposite leg should stabilise and control the motion. Often players' muscles fatigue too quickly or have limited ability to de-accelerate the leg during the kicking movement or during sprints. This can lead to hamstring tears and groin strains. Sports massage to the specific muscles which are shortened and overworked will reduce the risk of this occurring. By creating more flexibility in these specific muscle groups promotes muscle firing and allows good joint range in order to strengthen the weaker areas.

Muscles such as the Quadriceps and Hip flexors are very dominant within football. With repetitive use, these muscles will have fibres which bunch up and form areas of adhesions which lead to overall muscular stiffness. The layers of tissue can become bound down and significantly restrict joint movement. Muscle strength throughout the entire joint range can then be affected, leading to certain dysfunctional movement patterns. Identification of the poor movement patterns is necessary for preventing injury to tissue.

In season, different applications of massage are used depending on game and training schedules. Lighter sports massage can be used either straight after a game or in the following 24-48hrs to aid in recovery. Massage within this period will aid the removal of waste products from the muscles and increase blood flow to increase oxygen and nutrient delivery, therefore, decreasing muscle aches. The player will also experience less muscular tiredness symptoms. No deep tissue work is usually necessary at this time as the body is still recovering from performance.



Deeper massage can be used during the week leading up to the game leaving at least 2 days prior to the game as it may sometimes aggravate symptoms temporarily. It is applied to specific regions and is designed to alleviate muscle stiffness, spasm and pain and promote tissue health. This allows the body to recover and allow the physiological adaptations to take place so that the footballer can perform at their highest ability.

Sports massage aids body-awareness and by receiving treatment educates player by learning specific exercises and stretches that will lead to improved performance and reduce the risk of injury.