

Study: Massage benefits athletes

By Amanda MacMillan, Outdoor

If you're looking for an excuse to hit the massage table more frequently (or to justify the expense if you're already doing it), you're in luck. A recent study from the University of Illinois at Chicago backs up what we've long suspected: Massage therapy appears to ease muscle soreness after a hard workout.

Strenuous exercise causes a buildup of cell-damaging free radicals in the body, explains study author Nina Cherie Franklin. So she and her colleagues – supported by research grants from the Massage Therapy Foundation and the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute– measured blood flow and perceived muscle pain of 25 study volunteers after they used a leg-press machine “to soreness” and half of them received lower-body Swedish-style massages.

All participants felt sore immediately after working out, but by about the 90-minute mark, the massage group reported no lingering effects. The non-massage group, on the other hand, still felt lasting soreness 24 hours later. The first group also showed improved blood flow throughout the body for up to three days post-massage, while the second group showed reduced circulation for about the same amount of time.

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