

HELEN TO THE RESCUE

By **Helen Pufahl MS, NASM-CPT** Resident Contributor

Fascia – Your Body’s Glue

Fascia has gone from being a nobody to being the body’s superhero. It’s receiving long-overdue attention from trainers, athletes, medical professionals, alternative practitioners, and now, finally, researchers. No longer considered the ‘scraps’ of cadaver dissections, fascia has now attracted the attention of scientists and clinicians alike. Until recently, we understood the body to be composed of, literally skin and bones, which supported internal systems such as muscles, organs, and the fluids that make up over 60% of our body. Something was missing, however, because what holds it all in place? The skin? No! The skin is a part of the immune system and provides no structural support. And, what keeps all that water and fluid in us from pooling down at our feet? ... Fascia. At this moment you are probably looking for more clarification about what fascia actually is??

Fascia is described as a wonderful glove-like web of connective tissue that wraps around all the internal parts of the body from head to toe and fuses them all together. This thin casing of connective tissue surrounds and holds every organ, blood vessel, bone, nerve fiber, and muscle in place. The tissue does more than provide internal structure; fascia has nerves that make it almost as sensitive as skin.

Healthy fascia is smooth, slippery, and flexible. Distress in one area causes the fascia to become gummy and crinkle up (called adhesion). This can affect movement and create symptoms elsewhere. When there is dysfunction or pain in one area, the body adapts and compensates to keep the body upright and work without causing pain. As it does this, the fascia will shorten or tighten in areas because

the muscles cannot hold the extra tension alone. As a result, posture will change to accommodate this. Common causes of fascia pain are limited physical activity, repetitive movements, or trauma such as surgery or injury.

How can you help keep your fascia flexible? You can begin with simply moving more, stretching regularly, and focusing on posture while sitting and/or standing.

What are some ways to relieve fascia pain? Heat therapy, yoga therapy, foam rolling, massage therapy, and acupuncture.

It’s important to know where your pain stems from. Is your pain due to muscles, joints, or fascia?

You might attribute a painful neck or a backache to tired muscles or stiff joints. In general, muscle injuries and joint problems feel worse the more you move. Fascia adhesions tend to feel better with movement and respond well to heat therapy, which helps bring back the tissue’s elasticity.

Hope you found this Fascia-nating.

Yours in Fitness,
Helen Pufahl



Helen’s love of fitness began at an early age. She practiced dance, gymnastics, as well as, track and field. She’s an Exercise Physiologist with over 35 years of experience. She is also a certified personal trainer, corrective exercise specialist, nutrition consultant, and Senior fitness specialist. Owner: Unique Health & Fitness

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