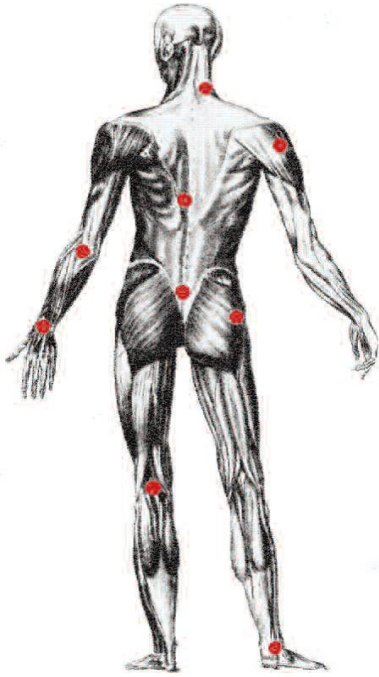




Active Release Techniques

SOFT TISSUE MANAGEMENT



Active Release Techniques (A.R.T.) is a non-invasive treatment used to correct conditions arising from overuse and repetitive stress injuries. A.R.T. is a hands-on-therapy designed to restore the normal texture and tension to soft tissue structures, allowing full function and actions once corrected. Muscles, tendons, ligaments, and nerve entrapment sites are the soft tissues A.R.T. works on. A.R.T. is used to break down scar tissue and adhesions that form within or between these soft tissues. The provider of A.R.T. uses his knowledge of anatomy, neurology, and biomechanics to correctly diagnose and treat injuries presenting for their care. What attracts so many professional athletes and weekend warriors to A.R.T. is the quick results obtained without surgery.

The History of Active Release Techniques

Michael Leahy, D.C., currently practicing in Colorado Springs, Colorado, started developing A.R.T. in 1984. Prior to practicing chiropractic, Dr. Leahy was an aeronautical engineer with the US Air Force. This engineering background allowed Dr. Leahy to approach soft tissue injuries from a new perspective, evolving into A.R.T.

The A.R.T. soft tissue management system is based on scientific evidence that muscles, nerves, blood vessels, and connective tissue develop adhesions within and between them after cumulative injuries. These adhesions cause the motion of muscles or joints to be altered, resulting in a wide variety of symptoms, including pain, weakness, reduced range of motion, numbness and tingling.

What is Cumulative Trauma?

Cumulative Trauma Disorder (CTD), Repetitive Stress Injury (RSI), and Repetitive Motion Injury (RMI), are used to describe problems that contribute to the Cumulative Injury Cycle (CIC). CTDs create physical signs and symptoms that are predictable and correctable using A.R.T. Examples include hip flexor strains in triathletes, upper back pain experienced after sitting at a computer for hours, shin splints after long distance running, and shoulder pain in athletes requiring throwing actions.

What Are Adhesions?

Acute injury sustained by trauma, exercise or repetitive stress leads to an inflammatory process. The body lays down scar tissue, which causes adhesions, in an attempt to stabilize the area. These adhesions form in a haphazard fashion, causing an altered texture and sticking together of tissues. A.R.T. is applied to separate these adhesions. Think of adhesions as glue that holds tissues together. If two muscles are "stuck" together, it will impede their function causing problems elsewhere, leading to a vicious cycle. This is how a shoulder problem can lead to an elbow problem or tight hamstrings can lead to low back pain. If adhesions form around a nerve, it can cause numbness and tingling. This is commonly encountered by people who use computers often, leading to carpal tunnel syndrome. The muscles of the forearm are under repetitive strain resulting in an inflammatory process that promotes scar tissue formation. This can be corrected if addressed.

Who Can Benefit from A.R.T.?

A.R.T. is used in a clinical setting on professional athletes, Olympic athletes, office workers, laborers, housewives, youth athletes, as well as others. What these people all have in common is altered movement patterns, but their mechanism or cause is different. Conservative treatments such as A.R.T. should be explored before a person has decided they can not be helped for their given condition.

What is Treatment Like?

After a diagnosis has been reached based on a history and examination, treatment can be rendered. A.R.T. is generally performed with a direct contact from the doctor to the patient's skin. The doctor will find the area to be worked on and either have the patient actively move a bodypart or passively move the bodypart for the patient. The doctor's contact, coupled with the movement of the patient, allows the adhesions to separate. The severity of the injury, as well as the length of time the injury has existed, are two critical factors as to how long it will take to resolve the case. Patients must take an active role in their recovery to help lessen the chances of reoccurrence. This may involve strengthening an area or modifications of certain activities. The treatment is sometimes uncomfortable, but most people describe it as a good type of hurt. Treatments are most effective when the appointments are initially scheduled close together. As progress is made, the time between visits is lengthened. The number of treatments needed to resolve a problem is variable and specific to each case with an average being 6-12 visits.