



# Scotland Massage Therapy

## What is Fascia?

You may have heard a Massage Therapist mention working on your fascia or doing myofascial release, and wonder, “What exactly *is* fascia anyway?” Fascia is thin, connective tissue that gives your body its shape; and ‘myo’ means muscle. There are different levels of fascia, and the outermost superficial or subcutaneous (underneath the skin) fascia surrounds the whole body like a living body suit. There are fascial bags surrounding your organs; deep fascia around muscle groups and individual muscles. The bones even have their own fascia called periosteum. Fascia is composed of collagen and ‘ground substance’ which is made up of GAGs (glycoaminoglycans) and 70% water. While fascia is very thin and has a spider web-like look to it, like spider webs it is extremely strong. Some has the strength of 2,000 lbs per square inch. When you have poor posture, like most people today hunched over their desks, the body actually strengthens the fascia and lays down more collagen to support this position. This contributes to your tightness and resulting pain. Dehydration, trauma to the body, activities of daily living and repetitive movement cause the muscle and fascia to bind together. This results in less muscle and joint elasticity and flexibility, hampering the muscles ability to move efficiently which can cause dysfunction and imbalances in other compensating areas of the body. Fascial trauma can also reduce muscle strength by up to 20% (Journal of Applied Physiology, vol. 5, 1981), cause dehydration of ground substance causing it to change from gel-like to glue-like, thus decreasing tissue mobility, increasing compression on capillaries and decreasing healing and metabolism.

So it is important to address both your daily posture, remain hydrated and incorporate your own, or professional myofascial release for your body. An RMT does this by applying pressure not deep into the muscles, but more *along* the skin and muscles with very slow movements or sometimes holding a particular fascial area until it softens. There are various techniques that can be used besides long, slow longitudinal strokes including torqueing small areas, cross-hands spreading, skin rolling, J-stroke. They are all done with no massage oil in order to engage the fascia with pressure and not glide over it. Having the client do specific movements during the work such as reaching over their head, tucking the pelvis, turning the neck, extending the leg, can also facilitate a greater release of the underlying structures. Many people report feeling much more free, light and even taller after fascial treatments. But there is no guarantee in an increase in actual height for those looking for a ‘lift’!



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