

Go on – Be a Sport!

I often get calls from new clients asking to book a 'sports massage'. As we talk, it becomes clear that they want treatment for a specific pain condition, usually chronic and often not caused by sport at all. Like many people, they have heard the phrase 'sports massage', but are not really sure what it means or what it can be used to treat, but they are hopeful that a sports massage will help their condition.

Before I started my training in sports massage, I too was not totally sure what it meant. Over the years I had sustained my share of injuries through sporting activities and thought that I wanted to treat sports people as I knew what it felt like to be carrying an injury. As it has turned out, my 'sports massage' clients cover a wide range of people and my main practice is now treating a whole range of chronic pain conditions, with a specialism in repetitive strain injury (RSI), which I treat at my clinics in Brighton and Harley Street.

For anyone who is considering a sports massage qualification, but is not sure if it is right for them, here are my answers to some of the most commonly asked questions to help you decide:

What is sports massage?

Sports massage is a combination of advanced massage techniques which equip you to treat sports injuries and many commonly occurring pain conditions. The main techniques include trigger point therapy, myofascial release, soft tissue release, connective tissue massage, neuro-muscular techniques and stretching.

Can I only treat sports people with these techniques?

Absolutely not! – although many therapists do specifically choose to train in sports massage because they want to treat sports people. If this applies to you, then this qualification will equip you to treat both amateur and professional sports people, in a professional club environment or a private sports injury clinic.

However many sports massage therapists are hardly involved with the sports scene at all. Most of the general public would not class themselves as sports people, yet they still suffer from a wide range of common chronic pain conditions such as frozen shoulder, lower back pain, RSI, hip & leg pain, headaches & migraine, neck & shoulder pain etc. Many of these conditions are caused by restrictions in the soft tissues (muscles & connective tissues) which can be successfully treated with advanced bodywork techniques such as sports massage.

In my own clinics I see many different clients, from sports people to professional musicians and office workers. What is common to all of them is that their pain conditions can be treated effectively through the manipulation of the soft tissues using sports massage techniques.

Why do I need a sports massage qualification to treat injuries & pain conditions?

Only therapists who hold a nationally recognised sports massage qualification, such as an ITEC diploma, can call themselves a sports massage therapist. And, more importantly, only those with a sports massage qualification can get insurance to practice sports massage. Sports massage courses are open to all therapists who hold an entry level bodywork qualification (eg ITEC Diploma in Holistic Massage) and have a minimum of 6 months post-qualification experience.

If you are serious about treating serious injuries, then get a serious qualification in sports massage.

What does a sports massage course consist of?

The training given on any good sports massage course ensures that students gain a thorough knowledge of the relevant anatomy & physiology through study of theory and hands-on palpation; the theory of sports performance, nutrition & training; and the specific sports massage techniques, including treatment protocols, for many common injuries and pain conditions.

Many Diploma courses run over 9-12 months on a part time basis which enables students to combine the course with other work commitments and also allows sufficient time to practice new techniques between modules.

At The Wilbury School in Brighton the course runs over 6 weekends, monthly from July to December, with each weekend combining theory & practical subjects. There is a further clinic/review day in January, followed by the ITEC exams (written & practical) in March. Students must also complete a written home study assignment and client case studies.

This format ensures that students have a thorough knowledge of both theory and practice and complete the course as confident and competent sports massage therapists.

From a personal point of view, gaining a sports massage qualification has helped me to completely change my practice. It has also opened the door to learning more about the wide range of techniques available to massage therapists and I continue to regularly go on courses to add to my knowledge. As one of my teachers says, the more tools you have in your toolbox, the better equipped you are to get your clients out of pain quickly and effectively!

If you are interested in joining the ITEC Sports Massage Diploma at the Wilbury School which starts on 11th July, please contact: *The Wilbury School of Natural Therapies, Brighton 01273 552766* www.wilburyschool.co.uk

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conditions caused by restrictions in muscles, fascia & connective tissues. She is also a co-director of RSI Clinics, specialist clinics for the treatment of RSI and related conditions, which are located in Harley Street, Brighton & Edinburgh and teaches Sports Massage at the Wilbury School in Brighton. For more information: www.softtissueclinic.co.uk 07742 567528.