

## FITNESS

# IT'S A WRAP!

Is that injury leaving you in pain? Try this taping method for instant relief

By JEANETTE WANG

IF YOU have ever suffered a joint or muscle injury, your doctor would have probably taped or bandaged the affected area and advised you to rest still until you heal.

But that is not the case with Functional Fascial Taping (FFT), an innovative treatment technique that is gaining popularity worldwide. With FFT, you could take your injury out to play.

"Our clients have been amazed that this simple taping technique is so easy to do, yet so effective," says Calvin Sim, a physiotherapist at local physiotherapy centre Core Concepts.

He recalls one of his clients who had suffered from nerve pain in her right arm and could hardly raise the limb. She was treated with FFT and, immediately, had the use of her arm again.

Singapore's Olympic table tennis team, says Sim, have also used the technique to relieve their tight iliotibial bands (a thick band of fibrous tissue that runs down the outer thigh, also called ITB).

All that is involved in FFT is some rigid sports tape and adhesive underwrap, applied to the injured area in a specific sequence, direction and tension to create a load on the fascia (connective tissue).

The tape pulls the fascia away from the source of pain, acting as an analgesic.

This allows for an increased range of motion for active rehabilitation, as movement or activity that was previously painful can now be carried out with less pain.

Australian Ron Alexander discovered and developed the technique in 1994, during his eight-year appointment as the Australian Ballet Company's principal remedial musculoskeletal therapist.

"FFT is less restrictive compared to traditional taping methods," says Sim, who has gone for Alexander's workshops. "We have used it a lot for lower back injuries. Many people find that they are able to bend over after using FFT."

The tape can be left on for up to a week. Alexander's theory is to have four to six weeks of continuous taping for effective treatment. It should not be used on fragile skin, open wounds or people sensitive to sports tape, or on joints that are fractured or broken.

While the taping can be self-administered (see examples on the right to treat heel pain and ITB syndrome), it is better to have a qualified physiotherapist do it. Consultation and taping cost about \$80 at Core Concepts.

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## How to tape



PHOTOS: JOSEPH NAIR FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

### Plantar fasciitis (heel and arch pain)

This endurance runner experienced soreness in her left heel due to a high arch with excess pronation (turning inward), according to physiotherapist Calvin Sim. With FFT, the runner was able to run pain-free.

1. Begin by taping a base layer with hypoallergenic adhesive underwrap.

The first strip should start from the middle of the foot's base and end at the outside of the heel. The second strip should go from the middle of the foot's base to the middle of foot's top.

There should not be any tension.

2. Repeat the steps with rigid sports tape, this time to create some tension. Pull the tape fairly tight so that the skin begins to gather.

3. Repeat the steps again with rigid sports tape that has been split half width-wise to further reinforce the tension.

With about 30 per cent of body weight on the foot, gather the skin and tape down to create a slightly crumpled look.

4. Repeat the steps with the underwrap again, just to cover and protect the taping.

### Iliotibial band (ITB) syndrome

This is pain on the outside of the knee caused by a tight ITB, a tough group of fibres running on the outside of the thigh from the pelvis to the knee.

1. Using a pen, mark dots on the lateral corner of the patella (the outside of the knee cap), the border of the lateral epicondyle (the bony protrusion on the side of the thigh) and the posterior femoral condyle (the bony protrusion at the back of the thigh). Mark dots for the mid-line so you know the direction of pull.

2. Begin by taping a base layer with hypoallergenic adhesive underwrap. The first strip should start 3cm below the lowest dot and end mid-front thigh. The second strip should start from the same place and end mid-back thigh.

3. Repeat the steps with rigid sports tape that has been split half width-wise to further reinforce the tension.

Use two strips for the front thigh and two strips for the back thigh, gathering the skin to create a crumpled look. Use one more strip for each of the front thigh and back thigh.

4. Repeat the steps with the underwrap again, just to cover and protect the taping.