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## **What is A.R.T.?**

**Active Release Technique is a highly successful movement based soft tissue/massage technique that treats problems with muscles, tendons, ligaments, fascia and nerves. It is a soft tissue therapy designed to treat overuse conditions. It was developed in the mid 1980's by Dr. Michael Leahy, Chiropractor from Colorado. Since this time, the popularity of A.R.T. amongst health care providers and patients has increased significantly and it is one of the most frequently used therapies by professional and amateur athletes.**

## **How do overuse conditions occur?**

**Overuse injuries involving muscles and other soft tissues occur in three different ways:**

- **Acute injury such as a pull or tear.**
- **Accumulation of small tears, otherwise known as micro-trauma.**
- **Not getting enough oxygen, also known as hypoxia.**

**The body's natural response to healing is the deposition of tough, dense scar tissue in a criss-cross fashion. This scar tissue acts like a glue that binds up and ties down tissues that need to move freely. As scar tissue builds up, muscles become shorter and weaker, tension on tendons causes tendonitis, and nerves can become trapped leading to numbness, tingling and weakness.**

**The glue-like adhesions or scar tissue limit muscle and joint movement creating an abnormal and/or painful movement, thereby increasing wear and tear on the joint if not treated. These adhesions can also stick to surrounding nerves resulting in numbness, tingling and radiating pain that is often associated with a condition such as carpal tunnel syndrome.**

## **What happens during and A.R.T. treatment?**

**After the history, examination, and diagnosis, the injured tissue is assessed for four major areas of concern, tissue texture, tone, movement, and function. The practitioner applies a manual force**

along the scar tissue or adhesion with a thumb or finger as the patient actively moves the limb or body part in a specific direction to separate and create tension between the tissues while the contact releases them.

These treatment protocols – over 500 of them - are unique to A.R.T. They allow providers to identify and correct the specific problems that are affecting each individual patient. A.R.T. is not a cookie-cutter approach.

Each treatment session typically lasts approximately 10-15 minutes. Treatments can feel uncomfortable during the movement phases as the scar tissue or adhesions "break-up". This discomfort is temporary and subsides almost immediately after the treatment. Symptoms are often duplicated during treatment and are usually relieved during the first or second treatment (a good indication that the problem has been identified). Patients typically report that "It hurts in a good way". Chiropractic manipulation is frequently combined with A.R.T. to increase treatment effectiveness.

Whenever possible the active motion is preferred because it stimulates neurological pathways in the spinal cord that help to reduce pain during treatment allowing for increased patient comfort and it closely simulates the requirements of the soft tissues in normal movements.

## **What to expect after the treatment**

Strength, speed and endurance are expected to improve within the first few treatments. We will often have our patients test these factors after two or three visits. If no improvement is seen, we know that either we have not found the source of the problem, or the area affected needs to be strengthened further.

Active Release Technique is non-invasive, very safe, has virtually no side effects, and has a record of producing very good results. When a soft tissue problem has resolved the symptoms will not return unless the injury happens again. To avoid future injuries we will recommend specific exercises, give postural recommendations and explain the mechanism of injury so that it may be avoided in the future.