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Kinesio taping is not your normal stick-on solution

By Gary Mihoces, USA TODAY

There is an entirely different school of taping. It uses just a few strips of placed elastic, cotton tape. No encasing.

Called kinesio taping, it originated in Japan about three decades ago. There are kinesio taping procedures for all sorts of muscle and joint problems. The tape is meant to be left on for several days.

Kinesio taping for lower back pain, for example, involves two vertical strips on each side of the spine and one horizontal strip over the strained area.

"There is a method to the madness," says John Jarvis, director of the Kinesio Taping Association, a division of Albuquerque,-based Kinesio USA, a company which imports kinesio tape from Japan for sale in the USA and Canada.

Jarvis says kinesio taping "corrects muscle function, improves circulation of blood and lymph, repositions the joint and relieves pain."

The placing of the tape along muscles is aimed at assisting movement. "As the muscle fibers contract, Kinesio Tape supports the contraction by pulling and stimulating the skin and muscle back towards the origin," the Kinesio Taping Association says in its literature. It says the lifting of the skin by the tape (which has adhesive activated by body heat) allows lymph to drain more freely.

"It's completely different from what they (athletic trainers) were trained to do," says Jarvis. "They were going to immobilize something. This is encouraging range of motion."


Kinesio USA originally had tape that came in hot pink and blue. It has added beige and black to accommodate teams that don't want it to clash with their colors.

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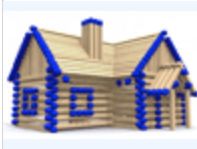
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In his 2003 book Every Second Counts, Tour de France champion Lance Armstrong noted his team used "a special hot-pink athletic tape that came from Japan and seemed to have magical powers."

Armstrong added: "Sometimes we'd be so wrapped up in hot-pink tape that we'd look like dolls, a bunch of broken dolls But the tape worked, so we kept it, because it could fix things."

Jarvis says, "The Lance thing really helped us" and that kinesio taping has the attention of athletic trainers.

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