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MYOFASCIAL CUPPING THERAPY

Have you seen the new ad from Under Armour featuring 22-time Olympic-medal winner Michael Phelps? It is an inspiring video that shows the strength, determination, and recovery required to be a record-setting world champion. If you pay close attention starting 44 seconds into the video, you'll see Phelps getting cupping! Phelps isn't the only famous person to discover the benefits of cupping. Celebrities such as Jennifer Aniston and Gwyneth Paltrow have been photographed with distinctive cupping marks on their backs and shoulders. What was once a mysterious, almost scary-looking treatment in the West is now hitting the mainstream due to its numerous health benefits.

If you are one of the many people who have thought about trying "Cupping" for relief of muscle tension and pain, but are not sure what it is all about or are maybe intimidated by rumors you have heard, this handout serves to set the record straight.

CUPPING HISTORY

While many assume that cupping originated in China with traditional Chinese medicine, the earliest records of cupping date back to Egypt in 1550 BC, where it was mentioned in the Ebers Papyrus. Egyptians are believed to have introduced it to the Greeks around 400 BC. The earliest recorded use of cupping in Asian medical systems dates back to a Taoist alchemist and herbalist who lived from 281 to 341 AD. Eventually, cupping was spread to the Americas and to Europe.

Cupping has increased in popularity and is used as an integrative therapy in modern medicine. Myofascial cupping is often incorporated into other manual therapy techniques such as massage therapy, myofascial release, trigger point therapy, and other injury rehabilitation techniques.

To perform cupping, practitioners place glass, bamboo, or silicone cups on the skin, creating a vacuum-like seal. When the cups are placed on the skin, the superficial muscle layer is drawn up into the cup, which stimulates the circulation of blood, breaks up adhesions, and creates a pathway for toxins to be drawn out of the body through the lymphatic system. Cupping can affect tissues up to four inches deep—impacting blood vessels, fascia, muscles, and scar tissue. More and more, cupping is showing up in physical therapy, chiropractic, sports medicine, and massage offices as well, under a different name—myofascial decompression (MFD). MFD is essentially the same thing as cupping, and it is being used in the Olympic games for pre and post-workout recovery and detoxification.

Cupping decompresses adhesions and scar tissue, relaxes muscles in spasm, decreases trigger-point pain, and decreases tissue changes and inflammation following trauma. Cumulative treatments increase muscle endurance, circulation, and lymphatic drainage. They enhance athletes' overall ability to recover from workouts and strenuous activity. No wonder Michael Phelps and other elite athletes are using it!



BENEFITS OF CUPPING THERAPY

Cupping therapy helps relieve pain, improve circulation, dispel stagnant blood and lymph, improve energetic flow, and even serve as a method to treat (when within scope of practice) such conditions as respiratory disease, bronchitis and pneumonia.

The ROCKPODS, created by RockTape, are unique from traditional cupping because the pods allow to grab, pull, and push fascia to treat pain, mobility, and movement dysfunctions. It affects the body's nervous, immune, and fascial systems. Cupping encourages the body's natural healing process by encouraging flow and discouraging congestion. Myofascial cupping is the OPPOSITE of massage and IASTM (Graston, "scraping", blading, etc). Rather than pushing and compressing soft tissue, the cups lift and decompress. The practitioner can push and pull on the cups to create a shearing affect between the layers of fascia. This helps increase mobility in tense areas of the body like the neck, shoulders, hips, low back, sacrum, thigh, calves, arms, chest, abdomen, IT Band and more. The cups also stimulate nerve receptors in the skin, which has a sedative effect on pain.

To recap, here are the benefits of cupping:

- Stimulates whole-body relaxation response (parasympathetic response)
- Stimulates oxygenation and detoxification of blood while promoting a feeling of lightness and tension relief
- Detoxifies metabolic debris in muscle tissue, fascia, and skin
- Increases range of motion, breaks up adhesions, and promotes healing in scar tissue and chronic injury sites
- Increases lymphatic drainage and promotes circulation

Given these benefits, here are some of the conditions for which cupping can be really helpful:

- Tight and stiff muscles
- Back pain and sciatica
- Piriformis syndrome and IT band pain
- Rotator cuff injuries
- Plantar fasciitis
- Migraines
- Respiratory conditions, including asthma and bronchitis
- Anxiety, depression, and stress
- High blood pressure (by calming the nervous system)
- Cellulite



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Areas of musculoskeletal tension or congestion are located using massage techniques, and cups may be applied on an affected area and moved over the surface in a gliding motion, or possibly put on a fascial adhesion or trigger point for a short time to reduce or eliminate it. The pods can be left on for 5-20 minutes to increase blood flow to a region, which delivers oxygen to the tissues. This encourages both healing and congestion removal, and facilitates the body's natural healing process to begin. It causes anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and anti-cell death chemicals in the body, which ultimately treats chronic pain, relieves tension, sedates the nervous system and manages tight fascia and muscles. There are 3 levels of RockPod Cupping, so if you're nervous about trying it, we can always start gentle and progress to level 3 as needed. Cupping is one of the most requested services by all ages at Kivett Kinetic Solutions and provides INSTANT pain relief and improved mobility in most cases.

WHAT IS WITH ALL THE BRUISES?

Depending on the amount of suction and the state of the underlying tissues, cupping can leave circular marks on the skin that range from a light yellow to pinkish red to dark purple. From an Eastern Medicine perspective, the darker the marks, the more stagnation of qi and blood in that area. Stagnation leads to pain and dysfunction within tissues, so cupping—like acupuncture—aims to clear the stagnation before it causes problems. From a Western standpoint, cupping creates more space between the tissue layers to get rid of dead cellular debris and excess fluids and toxins. It also breaks up scar tissue. The marks, then, are caused by this debris being pulled up and deposited under the skin, which is actually the most effective place for the lymphatic system to drain it away.

A strong suction leaves red markings with movement back and forth over the same area. This will look like bruising, BUT IS NOT A BRUISE. This technique brings toxins to the surface and they're removed through the lymphatic system. It's often referred to as STAGNATION. **Cupping procedures may leave light to dark red marks (stagnation) on the skin that disappear in 5 to 10 days.**

ARE THERE ANY CAUTIONS OR CONCERNS WITH CUPPING?

- Cupping can leave marks on your skin. It may take a few days to a week to fade completely. This is important to remember if you have a wedding or special event to attend!
- Keep the area where you received cupping covered from extreme changes in temperature (for example, a hot sauna or cold air conditioning) immediately after treatment. Cupping opens your pores, making you more susceptible to catching a cold.
- Do not receive cupping on the low abdomen or low back if you are pregnant.
- Do not receive cupping on areas where you have thin or damaged skin, or if you are taking blood thinners.