



by **DAVID BARLOW**

Kinesio Tape, or KT Tape, an elastic adhesive tape, offers a simple and practical approach to managing many injuries related to tendonitis, muscle strains, inflammation, and swelling that occur in all types of athletes.

Steve Mann, a physical therapist in Vermont said, “I have found kinesiology tape quite helpful for patients who can use a little extra support, help in facilitating appropriate muscle activation, or a gentle tactile reminder of proper posture or joint position for better pain-free movement. It is an effective tool at our disposal and the benefit of taping supports many aspects of injury healing in such a way that patients will often use it long afterward for managing persistent conditions.”

The general concept of Kinesio Tape is that it can provide a gentle lift of the skin and fascia away from muscle, promoting circulation and healing to injured tissue. In other circumstances, when it is applied more tightly around a joint or along a muscle, it can support or facilitate muscle activation, providing stability, improving movement, or reducing pain.

As a stand-alone treatment, there is minimal evidence to prove its overall effectiveness on building strength, resolving inflammation, or improving range of motion or flexibility. The reality is, though, that many people will attest to how effective taping can be, especially on pain and the perceived support of movement.

KINESIO TAPE DIY

SUCCESS STORY

Platform tennis player Tricia Wierdsma provided a perfect example of how Kinesio Tape works small miracles. In early November, she played in the Green Mountain Women’s Open. In a late afternoon match, she pulled an upper calf muscle, to the point where she had to be carried off the court and couldn’t put any weight on her right leg. She was scheduled to play again two days later. It was not clear that would actually happen. Wierdsma said, “I rested and iced for 36 hours and was shown how to use Kinesio Tape on my calf to support the muscle. The tape allowed me to play. It



was mixed paddle, so my partner covered 75 percent of the court. My mobility was limited to backwards, slowly forward a few steps, and a few steps sideways, but we managed pretty well, and I didn’t do further damage to my calf. I then stayed off the court for a full two weeks and continued to use Kinesio Tape for additional support. I haven’t had a twinge since.”

Many people who could benefit from Kinesio Tape are not certain how to apply it. There are numerous videos and apps that explain self-application strategies. For many injuries it may be best to consult with a physical therapist or other medical providers to fully rehab an injury, but there is the possibility of some short-term relief if you tape yourself.



APPLYING KT TAPE

- Make sure skin is clean and dry and free from lotions or oils.
- If applying KT Tape on a joint, be sure it is in a fully bent position. If the tape is applied over a knee or elbow in an extended position, it will pull off when the joint moves.
- Never stretch the first or the last of the tape on either end; otherwise it will pull up and will not stick.
- When cutting the tape, round off the ends to allow for better adherence and to reduce lifting or snagging the corners of the strips.
- Set the adhesive by firmly rubbing the tape to make sure all the edges are down. For best results, apply the tape 30 minutes before activity.
- When removing the tape don’t rip it off but gently peel back the edges.

APPLICATION METHODS AND TAPE TYPES

- I Strips: Typically used to support muscle and to provide muscle facilitation or muscle inhibition. Typical areas are the Achilles, IT Band, quads, and rotator cuff muscles. The more support needed, the more the tape needs to be stretched, taking 50-75% of the stretch across the area of need.

- X strips: Used to cover a larger area, typically when there is a need to crossover a joint such as the knee or elbow. Effective with hamstring injuries and through the shoulder and upper/lower back.
- Y strips: Often used to support patellofemoral joint issues.
- Fan strips: Commonly used with swelling or lymphedema issues in the arms and legs.
- Lift strips or Decompression strips: Used across areas of muscle sensitivity or trigger points to reduce tension. Often applied over an I Strip at the area of greatest restriction.

KT TAPE FAQs

- What is up with the colors? No performance difference, purely for marketing and personal preference.
- Can I get the tape wet? Yes, swim or shower as needed. This will not disturb the effectiveness of the tape. Apply one hour before.
- How long can I wear the tape? Wear time is generally three to five days; reapply as needed.
- What does it cost? A roll runs from \$14 to \$24.
- What brand should I use? Some have more pre-cut tape options and color choices. I have used Rocktape, KT Tape Pro, Kinesio Tec, and SpiderTech.
- Can I wear a brace over the tape? Certainly.
- Can I hurt myself by taping? If tape is applied incorrectly, the most likely result is there will be neither benefit nor harm.

While readers may still wonder how a piece of tape can truly provide any benefit, consider trying a new approach to managing injuries in 2018. Everyone could use a pleasant surprise in the new year. «»

TAPING DON'TS

Don’t apply tape to areas where the following may be found: rashes, cuts, sunburns, infections, cellulitis, DVT (deep vein thrombosis), fractures, allergies to adhesive tape, and malignancies.

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