

## WHAT IS FASCIA & WHY IT SHOULD BE IMPORTANT TO YOU

It was about 10-years into my yoga practice that I began to use ball rolling to release fascia. I didn't really understand fully what I was doing but as soon as I added ball work to my movement practice, I could go deeper into poses, my pain reduced, my posture improved and I felt better overall.

After this experience, I decided to dive deep into a study of fascia with Tom Myers, the author of [Anatomy Trains](#). What I found out was fascinating.

*"Fascia is the missing element in the movement/stability equation," says Tom Myers. "While anatomy lists around 600 separate muscles, it is more accurate to say that there is one muscle poured into six hundred pockets of the fascial webbing. The 'illusion' of separate muscles is created by the anatomist's scalpel, dividing tissues along the planes of fascia. This reductive process should not blind us to the reality of the unifying whole."*



Your fascia contracts, releases, feels and remembers all which impacts the way you move. It's your most robust sensory organ. It possess the ability to

contract independently of the muscles it surrounds and it responds to stress without your conscious command. It has been described as the carrier of your consciousness.

## **This is huge!**

It means that your fascia is impacting all your movements and your emotions, all the time.

Diving a bit deeper into the fascia remembering and feeling...

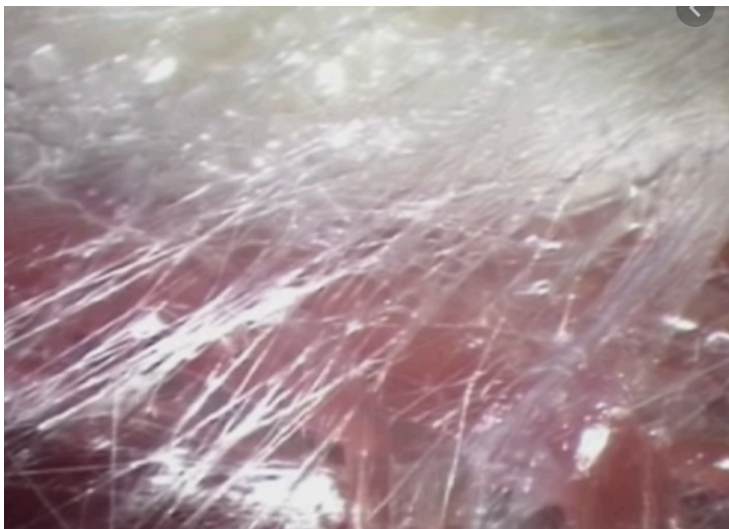
**Your fascia remembers** — It has memory. According to Cardiologist Bruno Bordoni who wrote the article The Awareness of the Fascial System, *“A fascial cell has not only memory but also the awareness of the mechanometabolic information it feels, and it has the anticipatory predisposition in preparing itself for alteration of its natural environment.”*

**Your fascia feels** — It impacts you emotionally. Bruno Bordoni also states in his article Anatomy Fascia, *“The fascial unity influences not only movement but also emotions. A dysfunction of the fascial system that is perpetuated in every-day movements can cause an emotional alteration of the person. This emotional alteration could be established originating from constant myofascial non-physiological afferents, which would bring the emotional state and the myofascial pathology to the same level. In fact, the position of the body stimulates areas of emotionality, and the presence of myofascial alterations leads to postural alterations.”*

**Your fascia carries your consciousness** — In the article The Structure That Carries Consciousness featured in the May/June 2016 edition of Energy Magazine, author Marisa Chadbourne, LMT, JFB Myofascial Therapist writes, *“Many scientists and bodywork therapists believe consciousness is tangible and can be touched. The fascial system, a super network of connective tissue is the physical doorway we can use to enter into consciousness. Fascia permeates our entire being three dimensionally,*

*uninterrupted from head to toe—through every organ, muscle and bone, precisely infusing into each and every cell. Within this extraordinary system lies a network of communication that is comparable to the operating system of a computer. The brain acts like the hard drive as it signals our bodies to move, organs to function, and holds astounding intelligence all on its own.”*

### **So, exactly what is fascia?**



According to James F. Barnes, PT, *“Fascia is a specialized system of the body that has an appearance similar to a spider's web or a sweater. Fascia is very densely woven, covering and interpenetrating every muscle, bone, nerve, artery and vein, as well as, all of our internal organs including*

*the heart, lungs, brain and spinal cord. The most interesting aspect of the fascial system is that it is not just a system of separate coverings. It is actually one continuous structure that exists from head to toe without interruption. In this way you can begin to see that each part of the entire body is connected to every other part by the fascia, like the yarn in a sweater.”*

Trauma, inflammatory responses, and/or surgical procedures create Myofascial restrictions that can produce tensile pressures of approximately 2,000 pounds per square inch on pain sensitive structures that do not show up in many of the standard tests (x-rays, myelograms, CAT scans, electromyography, etc.) A high percentage of people suffering with pain

and/or lack of motion may be having fascial problems, but are not diagnosed.

Fascia plays an important role in the support and function of our bodies, since it surrounds and attaches to all structures. In the normal healthy state, the fascia is relaxed and wavy in configuration. It has the ability to stretch and move without restriction.

When one experiences physical trauma, emotional trauma, scarring, or inflammation, however, the fascia loses its pliability. It becomes tight, restricted, and a source of tension to the rest of the body. Trauma, such as a fall, car accident, whiplash, surgery or just habitual poor posture and repetitive stress injuries has cumulative effects on the body. The changes trauma causes in the fascial system influences comfort and function of our body. Fascial restrictions can exert excessive pressure causing all kinds of symptoms producing pain, headaches or restriction of motion. Fascial restrictions affect our flexibility and stability, and are a determining factor in our ability to withstand stress and perform daily activities.

### **Try This —**

From Understanding your Fascia by Julia Lucus — *“Grab hold of the collar of your shirt and give it a little tug. Your whole shirt responds, right? Your collar pulls into the back of your neck. The tail of your shirt inches up the small of your back. Your sleeves move up your forearms. Then it falls back into place. That's a bit like fascia. It fits like a giant, body-hugging T-shirt over your whole body, from the top of your head to the tips of your toes and crisscrossing back and forth and through and back again. You can't move just one piece of it, and you can't make a move without bringing it along.*

*Now, pull the collar of your shirt again, only this time, hold onto it for eight hours. That's about the time you spend leaning forward over a desk or computer or steering wheel, right? Now, pull it 2,500 times. That's about*

how many steps you'd take on a half-hour run. Your shirt probably isn't looking too good at this point.

Fortunately, your fascia is tougher than your shirt is, and it has infinitely more self-healing properties. In its healthy state it's smooth and supple and slides easily, allowing you to move and stretch to your full length in any direction, always returning back to its normal state. Unfortunately, it's very unlikely that your fascia maintains its optimal flexibility, shape or texture. Lack of activity will cement the once-supple fibers into place. Chronic stress causes the fibers to thicken in an attempt to protect the underlying muscle. Poor posture and lack of flexibility and repetitive movements pull the fascia into ingrained patterns. Adhesions form within the stuck and damaged fibers like snags in a sweater, and once they've formed they're hard to get rid of.

And, remember, it's everywhere. This webbing is so continuous that if your doctor's office were to add a poster of your true human anatomy, including its fascia, fascia is all you'd see. Thick and white in places like your IT band and plantar fascia, less than 1mm and nearly transparent on your eyelids. And within all that fascia you have adhesions and areas of rigidity. You likely have lots of them.

But, this isn't bad news. Every bit of the damage you've caused your fascia is reversible, and every one of the problems it's caused you were avoidable. You take care of your muscles with stretching and ball rolling and massage. You take care of your bones with diet and restraint. You never knew that you needed to take care of your fascia, but now you do. You may just shake that nagging injury after all."

## **How to Take Care of Your Fascia**

1. **Create a daily Movement Practice that you do first thing every morning.** Remember fascia can withstand up to 2,000 pounds of pressure so you're not going to force your body open. Be gentle and move slowly.

2. **Include ball rolling in your daily Movement Practice.** Roll the balls back and forth and side to side to break up the tension in your fascia.
3. **Learn to fully and deeply diaphragmatically breathe.** Your breath will massage and loosen your fascia from the inside out.
4. **Drink lots of water everyday!** Your body is about 60% water for a reason — It operates better when lubricated! So keep your water levels high to keep your fascia and your whole body functioning well.
5. **Learn to let go and allow your body to hang out and rest.** In yoga, there is a saying that the rest is as important as the movement. Make resting as important as moving in your life.
6. **Listen to your body.** When it says stop doing whatever your doing don't keep pushing it — stop. Our culture is more masculine than feminine and supports all of us overdoing. Listen to the wisdom to come back into balance between doing and being.