

Herald Sun
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DIY massage

Regular massages can cost a packet, so learn how to do it yourself,
 writes DANIEL HOY



Pictures: TIM CARRAFA

THE alarm goes off and you roll out of bed. You might start the day with a limp and your back might ache. Whatever ails you, it can take a good 10 to 15 minutes of moving around before those aches and pains disappear.

Hobbling around the house becomes a morning ritual, much like starting the day with a coffee.

And the older you get, the more difficult getting out of bed in the morning becomes.

But it doesn't have to be this way. Being fit and healthy is about looking after the inside and outside of your body. The inside is taken care of by exercise and making sure you eat well, and the outside can also benefit from a little TLC.

Soft-tissue massage is a great way to relieve your body of the various aches and pains that occur over time.

Professional athletes often receive massages once or twice a week.

Physiotherapist Randall Cooper says: "Soft-tissue therapy is popular and beneficial for active people. There are many massage styles and techniques, however sports massage, which uses many deep-tissue massage techniques, is more commonly used for active people."

"Sports massage is commonly used to help reduce muscle tone (spasm), lines of tight tissue (bands) or tender tissue, and can also be used to assist in a warm-up for exercise and sport, as well as a recovery technique." "Different soft-tissue techniques are used for different purposes. Light to firm stroking techniques (Swedish massage) are commonly used to help reduce muscle tone and assist in flushing out muscles after exercise.

"More isolated deep-tissue techniques such as trigger-point therapy, frictions (small, firm oscillating movements) and deep-tissue therapy are commonly used to treat tender, tight muscles."

Cooper says soft-tissue massage can benefit everyone, not only elite athletes.

"Soft-tissue therapy can be used by anyone to help improve athletic performance, reduce the chance of injury, improve pain from injuries and even help reduce anxiety," he says.

"A skilled soft-tissue therapist can achieve terrific results and there's no replacing a skilled set

of professional hands. But unless you're very wealthy or dating a myotherapist, two or three weekly massages can start to add up financially."

This is where self-massage can be beneficial.

Even elite athletes such as Winter Olympic cross-country skier Katya Crema uses many self-message techniques to help her manage aches and pains.

"Massage is extremely beneficial," Crema says. "I don't think I could train as hard as I do without it."

"It helps to treat any existing injuries I may have, allowing me to do all the necessary training (sometimes up to three sessions a day).



Soft-tissue therapy can be used by anyone to help improve athletic performance and reduce the chance of injury

"I rely on self-massage when I'm on the road overseas, travelling from comp to comp. It's difficult to find physio/massage, so I have to rely on my own techniques."

Self-massage is a great way for people to benefit from massage without shelling out big bucks.

Cooper says: "There are several techniques people can do themselves, and with a little practice these techniques can be very effective."

"Most self-massage techniques are for treating tight or painful soft tissues, particularly muscles that are difficult to stretch with a normal static stretch such as the calves, shins, gluteals, iliotibial band (ITB), shoulders and neck."

"Self-massage can be done at any time, but it often complements a stretching regime."

Here are a few techniques you can try:



» neck

Lying flat on your back, rest your head on a small but firm pillow. With both hands reach around and touch the base of your skull at the top

of your neck with your fingertips. Working your way down, make small circular movements with your fingers. Increase the stretch on one

side of your neck by rolling your head slightly to one side.

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