

Kinesiology Taping: 101

EVERYTHING TO KNOW ABOUT KINESIOLOGY TAPE



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Athletic Tape VS Kinesiology Tape



Tapes are widely used by different types of people, regular folks, athletes, chiropractors, therapists, and the list goes on. The question is, what purpose do they serve? Athletes worldwide from high school heroes to international phenoms use tape to help support injured joints, overstretched ligaments, worn muscles, and nearly everybody part in-between.

What Are The Different Kinds of Medical Tapes?

Medical tapes come in different sizes and colors. Let's dive into it without getting too scientific.

- **Athletic Tape.** It is a stiff material that can reduce joint movement. It features a zinc-oxide-based glue that is strong and adheres to the skin well. There are different athletic tapes you can get today, such as the following:
- **Under tape.** It is a type of athletic tape that is gentler on the skin.
- **Elastic tape.** If you're looking for something more flexible, you can apply elastic tape instead. Typically, it's made of cotton, which allows the skin to breathe.
- **Felt tape.** This tape serves as a barrier to the skin, which makes it a more comfortable option compared to the other types of athletic tapes.
- **Cohesive bandages.** This bandage does not have a glue adhesive, but it sticks to itself when wrapped around a joint or muscle. This tape is popular in the world of football as it replaces the PVC sock tape. Moreover, it does not lose its stickiness, which means you can use and re-use it several times.



Kinesiology tape

This type of tape increasingly gains popularity. You have probably spotted a lot of athletes who have colorful tapes stuck to their skin. Kinesiology tape is commonly used in sports because it adjusts to the skin and accommodates movement.

A distinct quality of a kinesiology tape is its stretchiness and flexibility—it's extremely stretchy! This is because kinesiology tape is designed in a way to mimic the skin's elasticity to allow wearers to use their full range of motion, which is very unlike an athletic tape.

Additionally, kinesiology tape uses a medical-grade adhesive to ensure it can resist water and it can stay on for a couple of days, even in the shower. At most, kinesiology tape should be worn for three to five days. At TapeGeeks, we recommend letting your skin breathe after three days of wearing the tape.

Physical therapists believe that the tape can change the information the sensory nervous system sends about pain and body compression. Therapists have used kinesiology tape to lift the skin over tensed and knotted muscles. In fact, a [study](#) in 2015 showed that trigger point pain was reduced and flexibility increased for people using kinesiology tape and manual pressure.

What Is The Difference Between Athletic and Kinesiology Tape?



Athletic tape serves as a supportive tape, which is used on athletes to help prevent injury by providing support around an injured joint or muscle. The tape is applied around the wrists, hands, ankles, and feet for a specific athletic activity. Moreover, the tape can retain moisture for extended periods of time, which can cause skin irritation if not removed quickly.

To remove an athletic tape, a pair of blunt-edged scissors, which are also known as shark scissors, are used.

On the other hand, kinesiology tape is used for corrective and supportive purposes. The tape is thin and stretchy. As mentioned, its qualities are similar to the human skin. Additionally, the tape can be used three to five days prior to removal without movement restriction.

Why All The Hype About Kinesiology Tape?

Kinesio taping was first developed in 1979 by a Japanese chiropractor, Dr. Kenzo Kase. Dr. Kenzo wanted something that could prolong or somehow, continue the effects of manual therapy in between treatment sessions for his patients.



Kinesiology tape has unique properties that enable it to give dynamic support, as it still allows a considerable amount of safe movement. When the tape is applied to the skin, it lifts the skin and soft tissue away from the muscle to allow increased blood flow and lymphatic drainage, which many say could potentially lead to pain relief. Note that pain relief cannot be guaranteed.

Does It Work?



A [review](#) in the British Journal of Sports Medicine showed that “Kinesio taping is superior to minimal intervention for pain relief.” Other studies have found that taping may [potentially increase the range of motion](#) slightly, but there’s no evidence that one type of tape is [better than another](#).

A [randomized, double-blind, controlled trial](#), recruited 187 patients with grade I-III KO. The individuals were separated, with some to use Kinesio taping and the others in a control group. Kinesiology tape and the non-specific tape were applied on the affected knee area for four weeks—the pain was evaluated at a baseline, after a month of taping, and after another month without taping.

The majority of the individuals said that the tape reduced their knee pain, along with the use of painkillers, which significantly decreased.

Is Kinesiology Taping Just A Hype?

Study after study has documented the benefits of the placebo effect. People who think they've been given caffeine or morphine feel less fatigue or pain, even if all they've ingested is a sugar pill.



Indeed, taping can be regarded as having a placebo effect, in turn, taping will provide the wearer relief from pain. Placebos have been [shown](#) to be most effective for pain management, stress-related insomnia, and cancer treatment side effects.

A placebo is anything that seems to be a real medical treatment, but in reality, it is not. Placebo can come in the form of a pill, shot, or fake treatment. Additionally, a placebo contains an active substance that is meant to affect one's health.

Placebos are used during studies to help researchers understand the effect of a new drug or some other treatment. For example, some people will be given a new drug to help lower cholesterol, while others would be given a placebo.

The placebo effect is said to be due to a person's expectations. If a person expects a drug to do something, then it's likely that the body's own chemistry can cause effects similar to what a medication might have caused. Experts also [believe](#) that there's a link between how strongly a person expects to have results and whether or not results occur. The stronger the feeling, the more likely it is that a person will experience positive effects.



Some experts suggest that there may be a placebo effect in using kinesiology tape due to the high number of athletes who believe that it is helpful. In fact, a group of researchers dug deeper into the [placebo effect of kinesiology tape](#). The study supports a placebo mechanism of action for the tape's facilitatory technique. However, its effect is trivial.

There are plenty of medical or sport tape options out there, and what you use tends to be a matter of personal preference. Kinesiology tape is a popular choice because it offers great flexibility as it supports movement, unlike other athletic tapes today. Additionally, kinesiology tapes come in many cool colors! Be sensible when using tape—it's not a cure for everything. Instead, just think of taping as part of your overall routine, and make sure you pick a tape that is right for the job.



It does make sense why kinesiology tapes are commonly used by athletes, since competitions are won or lost by fractions of a second, and even a .05% performance gain could be the difference between standing on the podium or sitting off to the side.

The 11 Benefits of Kinesiology Tape



Muscle pain, injuries, and other muscle-related conditions can be a drag... especially when all you want to do is get your body moving. Good thing we have kinesiology tape. Ease your sports- or workout-related injuries easier, faster, and better with kinesiology taping.

When applied correctly, kinesiology tape will feel like another layer of skin, never getting in the way or limiting your movement. This is due to the fact that kinesiology tape mimics human skin elasticity and thickness. It is quite remarkable! Here are some of the tape's other benefits:

1. Taping Reduces Swelling and Inflammation



Swelling and inflammation caused by muscle injuries can be bothersome. Muscle swelling and inflammation are the body's reactions to an injury. Even a workout at the gym can cause your muscles to swell. Instead of taking pain medications or anti-inflammatory drugs, taping it up offers a more holistic approach with little to no side effects at all.

A study by Bialoszewski et al 2009 found that kinesiology tape can help reduce the swelling and bruising of the muscle. The elasticity of the kinesiology tape lifts the skin away from the swollen tissue below; therefore it provides less physical resistance to the retained fluid removal by your lymphatic and venous drainage systems.

2. Tape Creates Spaces In Joints to Prevent From Rubbing Together

A small amount of joint space between bones will make them rub together, or have more pressure on each other. When this happens, it can be painful.

Several studies showed that kinesiology taping increases the space in the knee joint. The same results were seen when the tape was applied to the shoulders. Kinesiology tape creates extra space. The extra space not only prevents bones from rubbing together but going back to our second point, this will reduce swelling as well. When the tape is applied there is a change in the pressure gradient in the area underneath the skin. The pressure enhances the flow of lymphatic fluid which reduces swelling.



3. Taping Improves Blood and Fluids Circulation

Our lymphatic system is how our body regulates any swelling and fluid buildup. By now, you're probably aware of the pain caused by swelling. The 2017 study also showed that kinesiology tape improves the circulation of blood and fluids in the body. It helps create spaces in joints and creates extra space under the skin. This boosts the flow of our lymphatic fluid in the body.

4. Taping Stimulates Bruise & Contusion Recovery

Bruises and contusions form when small veins and capillaries break under your skin. This causes internal bleeding, albeit most of them are not severe; they can be pretty painful.



Kinesiology tape gets applied to the bruise to drain the blood and encourage fresh blood to travel to the affected area. Fresh blood is filled with oxygen and nutrients that will help the affected area heal. Once again, this is all linked to our lymphatic system that removes excess fluid to help reduce swelling or bruising in the body. The lifting motion of the tape allows for the better flow of fluid in the body.

5. Taping Prevents/Relieves Muscle Spasms and Cramping

One way to prevent and relieve muscle spasms and cramping is to enhance circulation in the body. Good circulation means there is a steady delivery of oxygen and nutrients, which is perfect for overused or fatigued muscles. Kinesiology tape can help improve blood circulation in the body.

A study on the effects of kinesiology tape on skin blood flow shows that kinesiology taping could improve the blood flow in the skin and the circulation of lymphatic fluids.

6. Taping Accelerates Muscle Recovery

Don't you just hate it when your mobility is limited due to fatigued or overused muscles? Kinesiology tape can speed up the recovery and get you back in the game. When applied, the technology can stimulate the removal of lactic acid, hence, you get a speedier recovery. To add to that, it can also help boost your performance.



7. Kinesiology Tape Provides Support For Injured Muscles

A lot of people think that having kinesiology tape applied to affected areas of their body may restrict them from moving. This cannot be further from the truth!

Kinesiology tape has very unique elastic properties. This allows the tape to support muscle injuries and joint pain without restricting movement. You don't have to worry about your mobility with kinesiology tape, it moves when you move.

8. Taping Guarantees More Comfort Than Braces and Wraps

Braces and wraps help muscle injuries. If you've ever tried wearing either one, you know how uncomfortable they can get. Braces or wraps can restrict your movement. This is due to the fact that braces and wraps don't often fit right. Kinesiology tape is more comfortable and will not limit your range of motion.

After all, kinesiology tape is a tape that you apply to your body, and you're all set. It's recommended to be left on the skin for a few days at a time and you will barely notice that it's there.



9. Tape Reduces Risk of Injury

Kinesiology tape supports weaker limbs, therefore, it reduces the risk of injury. A study in the application of kinesiology tape in professional dancers showed that Kinesio taping could help in the primary and secondary prevention of injuries incurred in dancing. The analysis showed that kinesis taping could effectively reduce muscle spasms and rebuild muscle strength because it can improve the movement of the joints and regulate muscle tone.



10. Kinesiology Tape Allows You To Move

Another essential benefit of kinesiology taping which is highly valued by athletes is that it allows for a healthy range of motion. That said, you can still move and do most of your regular exercise routines even with the tape on. As mentioned, the tape moves when you do, and you do not have to worry about it falling off with movement—it's designed to stick and move with you.

11. Tape Improves Muscle Tone & Strength

Kinesiology tape helps improve the activation of the muscles by improving the interaction between the skin and underlying structures. Therefore, it resets the circuitry on this part that improves muscle activation and performance. It creates a balance in the neural circuitry in the muscles, skin, and joints that can enhance your muscle performance and function.



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Find Answers to FAQs About Kinesiology Taping



Kinesiology tape is one of the most popular non-invasive treatments for minor muscle injuries. If you are planning to try it out, you won't be disappointed. With the right knowledge and proper application, you will be able to gain the benefits from kinesiology taping.

Kinesiology tape is said to potentially reduce muscle pain and muscle soreness. Unfortunately, pain relief cannot be guaranteed. At the same time, you will gain more body awareness. However, before applying kinesiology tape for the first time yourself, it is crucial to familiarize yourself with proper application techniques.

Here, we have provided answers to your most frequently asked questions about kinesiology tape application.



Precautions for Kinesiology Tape Use

When applying kinesiology tape, do not apply to broken or damaged skin. If you have sensitive skin and it is your first time using kinesiology tape, perform a 24 hour skin test by first only applying a small patch of tape to the area you would like to treat. If any skin irritation occurs, remove the tape right away.

Remove kinesiology tape if you were to notice any:

- Skin irritation
- Pain or discomfort
- Increased swelling
- Numbness
- Tingling of fingers or toes
- Severe itching

We do not recommend using kinesiology tape if you have any of the following medical conditions:

- Congestive heart failure
- Infection
- Renal insufficiency
- Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)
- Active Cancer

Skin Preparation Prior to Using Kinesiology Tape

Kinesiology tape directly interacts with the skin and its underlying structures.

Kinesiology tape also influences similar systems your skin does, such as the neurosensory system, which is responsible for carrying pain signals to the brain.

Therefore, as you apply the tape, it will act as an extension of the skin.

Here is a quick step-by-step guide to preparing the area of skin where you will be using the kinesiology tape:

1. Clean the skin with hand sanitizer or rubbing alcohol. Make sure that the area is oil-free and dry. Make sure to remove any lotion.
2. If there is any thick hair on the area you wish to tape, it is best to trim the hair to about 1/8" so as not to interfere with the tape's ability to stick to the skin. Keep in mind that it is not necessary to shave the hair on the skin prior to the application of kinesiology tape.



Preparing Your Kinesiology Tape

If you are using a kinesiology tape roll, you need to round every corner when cutting the tape so that the edges will not peel prematurely due to rubbing on clothing or other materials.

1. Determine the number of pieces you need and your required length.
2. Use sharp scissors to cut the tape.
3. Round all the corners.
4. Fold a couple of inches from one end and tear the backing paper.



Make sure to avoid touching the adhesive side of the tape when you remove the backing. Note, that if you are also able to purchase pre cut rolls of kinesiology tape which simplifies the process. However, not all precut kinesiology strips will be the right length for all applications. You may require longer pieces or shorter pieces for certain body parts. If shorter pieces are needed you can cut precut strips to the desired length or shape.

Different Types of Application

Kinesiology tape can be applied in various shapes:



I shape. It is used for acute injuries, alignment correction and oedema. It is used for muscle facilitation and inhibition. Usually, the I shape is used to help support muscles, ligaments, and tendons. It is commonly used for the rotator cuff, gluteus muscles, quadriceps, or Achilles tendon. In some cases, it is used on the lower and middle back to help maintain a proper posture.

X shape. It is used when the origin and insertion of the affected muscle change on movement. It is used to cover large parts of the body and if there is a need to cross multiple joints. The tabs of the X shape crossover on sensitive areas such as the back of the knees and elbows. This shape is commonly used for the hamstrings.

Fan / Web. It is used for oedema. The web-shaped application is different because the ends will remain intact. The goal of a fan shape is to reduce the pressure on the area that will allow the lymphatic fluid to drain away through nearby lymph ducts.

Donut. It is also used for oedema and requires overlapping strips while the center is cut out over the target area. This shape is used to inhibit overused or stretched muscles.



The shape will vary based on the size of the affected muscle and the result that you want to achieve.

When applying your kinesiology tape, below are some additional tips you may find useful:

Activate the tape. Since the tape is made with an acrylic adhesive that is heat-activated, you can activate it by rubbing the tape from the center towards the ends of each strip. You can use your bare hands for this. Remember not to rub from the ends toward the center.

Use adhesive spray. An adhesive spray can come in handy. The spray can be applied to areas that are prone to friction. Additionally, the spray can help prevent the ends of the tape from being lifted.

Do not overstretch. Be careful not to overstretch the tape during application. If you are unsure of how much you should stretch your tape, it is always better to understretch than overstretch kinesiology tape. In addition, avoid stretching the ends of the tape. The ends of the tape are a form of anchoring. The ends, which should be about 2 inches long from each side, are the last part you are attaching to your skin.

Seek advice from a Specialist

You can apply kinesiology tape on your own. However, if you are unsure about how to tape a certain body part or have questions regarding a specific injury, you can always consult a specialist such as a sports medicine doctor, physiotherapist, or chiropractor.



What To Do When Your Tape Gets Wet

You do not have to worry about getting your tape wet. Kinesiology tape is water-resistant therefore, you can shower, bathe, or even swim whilst wearing the tape. After activities that cause the tape to get wet, you can dry it by gently patting the tape down with a towel. Best to allow the tape to dry for at least 20-30 minutes before doing any other activities.

Keep in mind not to use a hairdryer to dry kinesiology tape, as this may cause the adhesive to melt. Should the tape start to peel or rollback, you can trim the loose side with a pair of scissors.

Removing Your Tape

While many brands will stress that kinesiology tape can be worn for several days at a time, we recommend wearing kinesio tape for no longer than three days, with one day break in-between wears. This allows your skin some time to breathe.

When it is time to take off your tape, you do not need to rush to your therapist's office to have it removed—you can easily do it on your own. Here are some tips:

Remember to peel the skin from the tape, and not the other way around.

- Always remove the tape in the same direction as the hair underneath it.
- Never rip off the tape like it's an ordinary plaster because it's going to be painful this way.
- Start slowly and fold the corners well.
- Make sure to lay the removed tape on the back of the applied tape.
- Hold your skin down with your other hand or tap it while you peel off the tape.
- If the tape is applied over a hairy area, press down on the tape as you peel it off. The pressure will help prevent pain.
- You can also apply oil on the tape and wait around 10 to 20 minutes before removing it. The oil will reduce the stickiness of the tape.
- Consider removing the tape while you are in the shower. Make sure that the tape is thoroughly wet to help ease the removal process.

When removing the kinesiology tape from your skin, always remember to take your time.

What Happens When Kinesiology Tape is Applied Incorrectly

There is a proper application to kinesiology tape. As mentioned above, various shapes have specific purposes. So, what happens to the affected area when the tape is misapplied?



The common misconception is when the tape is applied incorrectly, it will cause pain or do more harm than good. This is not the case. The worst that could happen is that you will not get the relief that you need when kinesio tape is applied incorrectly. Therefore, it is crucial to get informed on proper application techniques, prior to applying kinesiology tape.



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We hope this ebook answers your questions about kinesiology tape and how to use it. Applying kinesiology tape is easy. All of the tips mentioned will help you get the most out of kinesiology taping.

There are many resources that can be easily accessed online to show the proper procedure for taping specific areas of the body. Consulting a specialist is also a great way of gaining knowledge on how to tape areas you need to treat the most.

Nevertheless, you can apply kinesiology tape on your own. All you need is to follow the right tips and do your research well. Kinesiology tape will provide you with the relief you deserve to continue your active lifestyle.

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