

BE WELL

Want to Be More Flexible? Focus on your Fascia

By Debbie DeAngelo
August 2023



Have you ever wondered how your bodily organs stay in place or why you can't touch your toes? Much of the answer lies in a largely unknown entity in our body known as fascia.

Pronounced "fasha," this highly structured network of connective tissue gently wraps around all of our body parts, from organs to muscles to nerves, keeping everything intact. Think of it as Spanx beneath your skin. (Gentlemen, kindly ask the women in your life about this.)

It's also pivotal to flexibility. When fascia is healthy, it is supple and allows us to move, bend and twist effortlessly and pain-free. This is due to its ability to slide and glide. If it becomes tight and sticky, then we may experience muscular stiffness, muscle knots, adhesions (scar tissue) and pain. Fascia can become

inflamed due to sports injuries, surgery, repetitive motion or overuse (i.e., plantar fasciitis), improper posture or body ergonomics, a sedentary lifestyle, and connective tissue diseases.

The good news is that we can influence the functioning of our fascia.

Free Your Fascia

What used to be thought of as an inert membrane is now being viewed as biologically active scaffolding in the body. Studies are underway to examine the potential role fascia plays in chronic pain as well as in immune system regulation. Given the driving force of fascia to our daily movement and comfort, it makes sense to nurture it. The following steps can keep your fascia healthy and balanced.

Stretch. Slow, rhythmic stretching that elongates the muscles can enhance suppleness and elasticity of fascia. When the fascia moves freely and glides over the muscles, our range of motion increases. Often, we think we have stiff muscles when it's actually stiff fascia. Before getting out of bed in the morning, spend a few minutes stretching out full length. After that, sit on the edge of the bed, extend your legs, and point your feet. Later in the day when your muscles are warmed up, engage in a 10-minute stretching routine.

Hydrate. This is yet another example of why our body needs adequate fluid. In order to move freely, the fascia needs water. How much fluid? Some sources recommend drinking half your body weight in ounces. For example, a 150 lb. person would need 75 ounces of fluid daily. Unless you have a medical problem that requires restricting your fluid intake, I typically suggest drinking enough liquids to turn the urine pale yellow or clear.

Massage. This can be accomplished via a foam roller at home or a massage therapist. Foam rolling helps prevent delayed muscle soreness from overuse and aids in recovery. It can also be used as part of a warm-up prior to exercising. Simply use your body weight to roll back and forth over the foam roller. Most people use it on their back, glutes, legs, and soles of the feet. Additionally, a massage by a professional therapist trained in myofascial release techniques is well worth every penny. Benefits include relieving muscle tension and knots, expanding range of motion and improving circulation.

Move. Moving more than you sit keeps the fascia agile; however, correct body ergonomics is equally impactful. Proper posture while standing, sitting, and using electronic devices is crucial to combatting tightness and injury of the fascia. When it comes to exercise, it's all good, but flowing movement such as dance or Tai Chi, are best for fascial health.

It's never too late to pay attention to the signals your body is sending and to take steps to address them. You'll be rewarded with an enhanced quality of life. If you take care of your fascia, it will take care of you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Debbie DeAngelo, RNC, BSN, is a holistic health coach, health correspondent for JET-TV and FOX 66 in Erie, Pennsylvania, and author of "Sudden Menopause." Debbie can be reached at debbie@healthonheels.com.



[Subscribe to JES Publications Emails!](#)

[Support JES | Donate](#)

In Case You Missed It

[Jefferson Report | Transatlantic Idea-Sharing Can Lead to Just Economic Future](#) written by JES Vice President **Ben Speggen**

[The Wider World | Niger Revisited after Military Coup](#) written by President of DC Analytics **Diane Chido**

[Truth in Love | Memorializing Emmett Till and His Mother Exposes Cruel Moment in Nation's History](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. Parris J. Baker**

[University of Vienna \(Part Two\)](#) written by Director of the Brock Institute for Mega Issues Education **Rev. Charles Brock**

[Be Well | Sporting the Perfect Shades](#) written by health and wellness expert **Debbie DeAngelo**

[Book Notes #153 | 'Americans & Their Games' \(Part IV-B\)](#) written by
Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. Andrew Roth**

[Where Did Lake Erie's Blue Pike Go?](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-
Residence **Dr. David Frew**

Jefferson Educational Society | jeserie.org

