



Kinesio Taping is Not Just for Athletes

Gary Knafla, LPTA
Physical Therapist Assistant
Andover Physical Therapy

Many people have seen Kinesio Taping at the last summer Olympics in Beijing where the US women's beach volleyball team wore it very prominently on their shoulders. It is not just for athletes though. It is a unique tape that mimics what the skin can do. It is very elastic and it can be worn for 3 to 5 days before you need to remove it. There is no latex in the tape and the adhesive is 100% acrylic and is heat activated.

Kinesio Taping works by lifting the skin to improve fluid and movement and alleviate pain. There are five main physiologic effects of Kinesio Taping. They are working with the skin, circulatory and lymphatic systems, fascia, muscles and joints. One of the effects is that Kinesio Taping will work with all three layers of the skin; the endoderm, mesoderm and ectoderm since all three of them are interconnected. Kinesio Taping can treat the entire body from the outside in. In effect, it can facilitate muscles by taping from the origin of the muscle to the insertion of the muscle and it can also inhibit the muscle movement by taping from the insertion to the origin. It can help decrease inflammation and it can help relax muscles. It improves the drainage of the lymphatic system. It works very well in lots of different areas. You can use it on your neck, knee, and elbow. There are hundreds of applications. After about 5 minutes, you do not even feel the tape; it works with the body that easily.

Applications of Kinesio Taping will depend on what body part that needs to be worked on. There are six techniques; they are the "Y" cut, an "I", an "X", fan, a web and a doughnut. Each one is used in a specific application which should be referenced prior to the application. The "Y" technique is the most common method of application. It is used for surrounding the muscle to either facilitate or inhibit the muscle stimuli. The principle of therapeutic taping for weakened muscles is to wrap around the muscle and that is with the "Y" strip. The "I" strip can also be used. Its primary purpose is following an acute injury and to limit edema and pain. The fan strip is for lymphatic drainage. The web is a modified fan where both ends are left intact and the middle is cut. The doughnut is primarily used for edema in a focal or sports specific area and those tend to be a series of 2 to 3 overlapping strips with the center cut out. The "X" strip is generally used when a muscle crosses two joints and where it can be increased in length. It is generally placed over the muscle belly.

The main limitation with taping is the person that may have excessive body hair at which point a person may need to do a little trimming so that the adhesive can land on the skin properly and so the tape can have it best property shown. It is another tool for physical therapy. Ask if it would be appropriate for your condition.