



PROfiles: ART Explained

What is Active Release Techniques?

ART is a collection of soft tissue techniques for examination, diagnosis and treatment of soft tissue disorders. It is a non-invasive healing procedure that locates and breaks down scar tissue and adhesions that cause soft tissue injuries.

ART targets very specific problem areas and heals through a unique combination of pressure, tension and motion. This method releases, stretches and loosens connective tissue adhesions or scar tissue, allowing the restoration of circulation, range of motion and strength. Through the assessment of tissue texture, tension, movement and function, ART provides a way to diagnosis and treat the underlying causes of a variety of conditions collectively called Cumulative Trauma Disorders (CTD's.) Active Release has proven itself to be a fast, effective, non-invasive way to heal a wide range of soft tissue injuries and movement based muscular problems allowing people to get moving again comfortably and without pain.

The Active Release Treatment

Restoring tissue elasticity and longitudinal freedom of motion is the goal. In ART the tissue is placed in a shortened position, and then drawn under specific type of contact while the problem spot is manipulated. The patient motion is active whenever practicable.

Poor Tissue Gliding

Tissues must glide properly to function well. When this sliding is defective, soft tissue symptoms appear, even crepitus, which is the grinding noise and popping noise muscles make when they do not slide properly with or over structures.

Understanding Soft tissue injuries

There are three common mechanisms that produce soft tissue injuries, 1) Acute trauma like a tear or bruise, 2) Constant Pressure usually found in overuse problems and 3) Repetitive Motion which prevents the tissue from resting and repairing.

Symptoms of Soft Tissue injury

Most commonly numbness, tingling, burning, aching and weakness are noticed. Soft tissue dysfunction can often lead to loss of flexibility, strength and range of motion in the absence of other symptoms.

Adhesions and scar tissue formation

When a muscle, tendon, ligament or nerve is damaged it will repair the area with scar tissue in a predictable and palpable way. Scar tissue feels like the "sticky" side a piece of tape, one tissue literally pulls on another or pulls on a structure next to it or going through it, like a nerve for example. Friction, pressure or tension causes a decrease in circulation. The tissue responds with fibrosis and adhesions in and between the tissues.

What are "Cumulative" Injuries?

Cumulative injury is a group of injuries to the muscles, tendons, bones, blood vessels, fascia and/or nerves. Cumulative injuries are self-perpetuating unless the pattern is corrected. CTD's are also known as Repetitive Stress Injuries (RSI's) or "Overuse Syndromes"



Familiar Cumulative Injuries

You know them as Tendinitis, Rotator Cuff, Carpal Tunnel, Plantar Fasciitis, Poor Posture, Shin splints, Golfers Elbow, Bursitis, and chronic back pain.

What to expect from ART

Significant results should be seen within 2-3 visits. Muscle strength typically begins to return on the first or second visit. Treatments can be uncomfortable; patients report that it "hurts good" or is reproducing the symptoms. Both are temporary and stop after the treatment, a good sign that ART is solving a problem and healing an injury. Patients report a freed-up, expansive or blood flow feeling with better movement.

How often and is it permanent?

Typically treatments are done 1-2 days apart, in some cases an even longer period is needed. Full resolution in 4-6 visits is common, though it could take as many as 10 or more in some cases.

Is ART Chiropractic Care?

No, it is considered a form of manual therapy, often administered by a chiropractor accredited in ART.

Active Release vs. Other Therapies

Much confusion exists with the term Myofascial Release. The term can mean anything from massage to aggressive deep tissue work aimed at "releasing" certain tissues. ART is NOT massage, physiotherapy or chiropractic. While those procedures relieve muscle and motion dysfunction, they do not necessarily address the underlying problems caused by scar tissue or adhesion formation.

Becoming a provider of ART

Only specially trained and accredited practitioners may perform ART. To be accredited, one must possess advanced knowledge of Anatomy, Neurology and muscle physiology, prior to attending the intensive training program. Becoming Proficient in ART is comparable to learning to read Braille. It is a very difficult skill to master, so practitioners are carefully trained.

They may say they do, but do they?

Great technique and great results require great effort. Some people say they do ART when they really don't, or they have just read about it and think they do it. Poor results are inevitable if they are not accredited.

Why ART is in Demand?

ART has become the treatment of choice for muscular and Tendinitis type injuries because it corrects the cause, it's fast, effective and often only requires a few treatments for long lasting results. For athletes, fast and complete recovery from long standing muscular and repetitive strain injuries is common.