

What is Kinesio Tape?

Elastic therapeutic tape, more commonly known by its brand names, such as Kinesio, SpiderTech or KT Tape, is a type of latex free, elastic cotton tape used to treat athletic injuries as well as a variety of physical disorders. Utilizing a heat-based adhesive, the tape can safely be worn by pediatric to geriatric populations for days at a time. The tape, initially invented by Japanese chiropractor Kenzo Kase in the 1970s, claims to treat a variety of orthopedic, neuromuscular, neurological and other medical conditions.(1)



Based upon years of clinical use, elastic therapeutic tape is specifically applied to the patient based upon their needs after evaluation, which is key in the treatment of any clinical condition. In order to get the desired results from an elastic therapeutic tape application, a full assessment is necessary. The findings of the clinical assessment, which may include manual muscle testing, range of motion testing, gait assessment, and any other orthopedic special tests, dictate the specifics of the elastic therapeutic tape application as well as other possible treatments or modalities.¹ With the utilization of single “I” strips or modifications in the shape of an “X”, “Y” or other specialized shapes as well as the direction and amount of stretch placed on the tape at time of application, elastic therapeutic tape can be applied in hundreds of ways in order to affect one of the tape’s several theoretical benefits.¹ Benefits include correcting the alignment of weak muscles as well as facilitating joint motion as a result of the tape's recoiling qualities.⁽²⁾ Additionally, the tape is claimed to lift the skin, increasing the space below it, and increasing blood flow and circulation of lymphatic fluids or swelling.⁽²⁾ This increase in the interstitial space is said to lead to less pressure on the body's nociceptors, which detect pain, and to stimulate mechanoreceptors, to improve overall joint proprioception.⁽²⁾

The above named benefits may contribute to users' reports of positive physiological effects on the skin, lymphatic and circulatory system, fascia, muscles, ligaments, tendons, and joints.(1) Elastic therapeutic tape may be used in conjunction with a multitude of other treatments and modalities and can be effective during the rehabilitative and chronic phases on an injury as well as used for preventative measures when applied correctly.(1) Despite these positive reports and anecdotal evidence, however, there is little scientific evidence that elastic therapeutic tape produces clinically significant benefits and proponents may be experiencing nothing more than a placebo effect.(1) That being said, elastic therapeutic tape maintains its position as a popular treatment choice among athletes and non-athletes alike.

1. Kase, K., Wallis, J., and Kase, T. (2003) Clinical Therapeutic applications of the Kinesio Taping Method®. Ken Ikai Co. Ltd, Tokyo, Japan
2. Williams S, Whatman C, Hume PA, Sheerin K (2012). "Kinesio taping in treatment and prevention of sports injuries: a meta-analysis of the evidence for its effectiveness". *Sports Med* **42** (2): 153–64.

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