

This TelAbility handout describes how therapeutic taping can help children with movement problems

What is Therapeutic Taping?

Adhesive taping techniques have been used with athletes to support a joint following injury. With the development of new and more elastic taping materials these techniques have been modified and used for a wider variety of conditions. For example, specific taping techniques have been developed with the intended purpose of relaxing an overactive muscle or supporting contraction of a weakened muscle.

When might taping be used for people other than athletes or with orthopedic injuries?

Taping is sometimes used by therapists for people who have difficulties with muscle control caused by developmental or neurological conditions. Taping might be used temporarily to help predict response a child might have to a more permanent form of support like an ankle orthotic (brace). It might also be use to reduce the effect of spasticity on movement at a specific joint, to support a weak muscle, or to encourage a weak muscle to move.

Considerations (advantages & disadvantages)

- Inexpensive,
- Non-invasive
- Application may be very simple or could be very complex and time-consuming depending on the problem being addressed.
- Can be applied to virtually any superficial muscle or about most joints.
- Determination of the correct taping techniques requires a sophisticated understanding of the biomechanics, neurology, and physiology of the child's problem to avoid, for example, weakening an already weak muscle or adding abnormal stress to a joint and to accomplish the intended therapeutic benefit.
- If taping isn't done correctly it may weaken an already weak muscle, add stress to a joint, or reduce circulation.
- Simple application might be taught to a caregiver but more complex applications may need to be done by the therapist.
- Taping needs to be reapplied frequently and removing tap can sometimes we difficult and uncomfortable.
- Some people may have an allergic reaction or skin irritation from the tape.
- Taping should not be done over fragile skin or open wounds.

Taping should only be used temporarily and with other forms of therapy (i.e., exercise & activity). There is almost no evidence in the research literature that therapeutic taping helps movement problems. Each child's response should be monitored to determine if the intended goals are being accomplished.

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For more information:

<http://www.kinesiotaping.com/>

<http://mcconnell-institute.com/aboutmcconnell.html>

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Hertling D, Kessler RM. Management of Common Musculoskeletal Disorders: Physical Therapy Principles and Methods. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Philadelphia, 1996