

Laser Therapy and Sports Injuries

Written by former owner of Fitness Excellence, Mia Sutherland and Dr. Deidre Macdonald, Naturopathic Physician

Want to know a secret to seven-time Tour-de-France champion Lance Armstrong's cycling success? In addition to an out of this world V02 max and unparalleled will to win, Armstrong had a little something else on his side: light therapy.

From the 2000 Tour until his retirement following his 2005 victory, Armstrong and his Team Discovery team mates received laser treatments before and after most of the event's 21 stages. Whether using it to unlock tight quadriceps before the start of a stage or applying it to stimulate tissue repair after a high-speed spill, Jeff Spencer, DC, chiropractor for Armstrong and his team mates, considers his laser an integral part of his tool kit.

As well, sporting icons such as Tiger Woods, The Miami Heat and The Toronto Maple Leafs utilize low intensity laser therapy for the management of injuries along with other famous athletes such as tennis great, Daniel Nestor, golf sensations Al Balding and Steve Jones, New York Yankees David Wells and hockey players Jamie Allison, Mike Palmateer and Travis Green.

Although there are many forms of laser widely available in Canada today, we at the Macdonald Centre for Natural Medicine utilize the BioFlex laser from Meditech International, a Canadian based company. Laser therapy has been around since the 1960's but the Meditech machine takes advantage of recent advances in laser technology that have seen the development of new equipment with large flexible pads capable of treating large and small surface areas effectively and efficiently. Dr. Deidre Macdonald, Naturopathic Physician, chose this machine after months of research into the founder, the company, the results and ultimately the machine. MediTech International was founded by retired vascular surgeon, Dr. Fred Kahn in Toronto in 1989. Since its inception MediTech has placed the BioFlex machine in 372 therapeutic settings throughout North America, including 3 systems in a hospital in Mississauga and systems at a University Hospital pain clinic in California.

As the former owner of Fitness Excellence and a Medical Exercise Specialist for 12 years, specializing in athlete and post-rehab care, I was exposed to many different methods of physical therapy, but not low intensity laser therapy. Being the type of person who needs to experience things first hand, I started using the laser on my athlete's bunion and degeneration in my knee and was pleasantly surprised to experience such a significant reduction in deep joint pain as well as superficial pain. I would quite often spend several days recovering from a run and now I can run every second day without any increase in pain.

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At The Macdonald Centre for Natural Medicine we have experienced excellent results in the treatment of chronic and acute conditions with laser therapy. Its use in a post-operative and open wound setting has seen the most visible results. Recently a client with a ruptured Achilles tendon started with laser therapy two days after his accident and again starting two days after his surgery. His bruising, swelling and wound irritation along with the pain decreased dramatically. Range of motion improved quickly and visual changes in circulation were recorded. Along with the post surgical recovery, stubborn diabetic ulcers have been an excellent test, with dramatic results, for the effectiveness of LILT.

So how does low intensity laser therapy work? Low intensity laser therapy (LILT) stimulates cellular function at many levels including metabolism; in essence it promotes the initiation of multiple physiological and beneficial effects in the repair and function of human cells. LILT is widely used in the medical and cosmetic fields, principally because it is non-destructive to the target tissue, while positively affecting many functions such as collagen formation, cellular metabolism, angiogenesis and lymphatic flow.

Pain is a symptom of injury. Laser therapy doesn't just mask the symptom, it treats the injury by activating biochemical energy and accelerating the healing process. This type of cold laser is absorbed by damaged soft tissue. The end result is the resolution of inflammation and the development of normal, healthy tissue rather than scar tissue. Your pain is alleviated because the injury has improved or been cured.

If you would like more information about Bio-Flex laser therapy visit www.bioflexlaser.com or call us at 250-897-0235. The Macdonald Centre for Natural Medicine is located at 448-10th Street in Courtenay, across from Grains Bakery.