



OLLI: DAILY

Your dose of wisdom & motivation

WEEK 1

BEHIND ENEMY LINES: YOUR FASICA & WHY IT'S FIGHTING BACK

To kick off the first series within "OLLI: Daily," I came clean that I've made a lot of mistakes as an athlete, trainer and coach. My resulting experiences have enabled me to understand the struggles so many of my clients face when trying to reach their goals. It has also encouraged me to educate myself, both with knowledge and practical application, to train myself back to a healthy, balanced place. From the small battles I've conquered, and the accomplishments I have had the joy of seeing friends, family, and clients achieve, it is clear that the faults I've made and the topics I've explored are applicable to a large majority of the population. To start the conversation, let's solve the riddle that's likely been plaguing many of you:

What covers your body from head to toe, is stronger than muscle fiber, could be the cause of your pain and injuries, but often goes undetected?

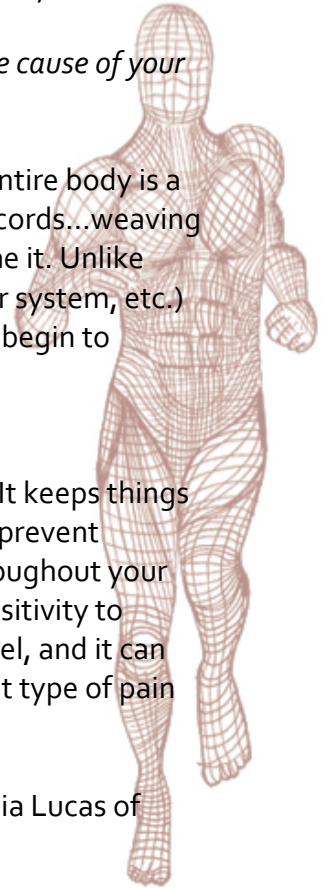
That's right folks, it's called **fascia**. Connecting, protecting, and encasing your entire body is a system made of collagen fibers that are packed tightly together, creating thick cords...weaving in, out, and around every part of you---muscles, bones, nerves, organs, you name it. Unlike other systems you may have heard of (like your digestive system, cardiovascular system, etc.) the webby, messy, expansive system of fascia has taken much research to even begin to understand.

Let me break it down for you:

Fascia is sort of like a saran wrap sheath encasing individual parts of your body. It keeps things where they are supposed to be, allows movement between structures, helps to prevent overstretching, and is essentially all connected to every other fiber of fascia throughout your body. Perhaps the most interesting thing about fascia, is that it has a higher sensitivity to stress & movement than muscles do. This stuff can contract on its own, it can feel, and it can have a serious effect on how you stand, how you move, how you sleep, and what type of pain you might be feeling every day.

This is probably still hard for you to envision, so here is a great example from Julia Lucas of Runners World Magazine:

"Grab hold of the collar of your shirt and give it a little tug. Your whole shirt responds, right? Your collar pulls into the back of your neck. The tail of your shirt inches up the small of your back. Your



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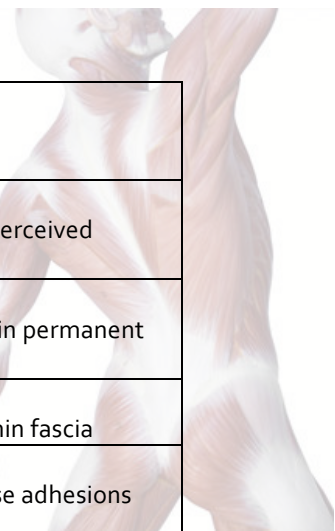
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sleeves move up your forearms. Then it falls back into place. That's a bit like fascia. It fits like a giant, body-hugging T-shirt over your whole body, from the top of your head to the tips of your toes and crisscrossing back and forth and through and back again. You can't move just one piece of it, and you can't make a move without bringing it along. Now, pull the collar of your shirt again, only this time, hold onto it for eight hours. That's about the time you spend leaning forward over a desk or computer or steering wheel, right? Now, pull it 2,500 times. That's about how many steps you'd take on a half-hour run. Your shirt probably isn't looking too good at this point."

Thankfully, the human body is incredibly resilient and fascia can withstand a fair amount of stress and trauma, while maintaining the ability to be restored to its natural state. When functioning properly, fascia is lubricated, smooth, and moves with little resistance. This functionality allows you to stretch every which way, without your body falling apart into a blob. The majority of us, though, don't have perfectly functioning fascia. We take time to stretch, we might heat our muscles or practice some type of soft tissue release, but few even know how to take care of fascia. From the top of our heads to the tips of our toes, and every place in between, we have fascia. Some places very thin, other places—such as our IT bands—very thick and rigid.

Here are some things that affect fascia, and how our bodies are likely to respond:

Lack of physical activity	Tight, rigid, resistive fascia
Chronic stress or lack of recovery	Thickening fibers to protect body from perceived "threats;" results in resistive fascia
Consistent poor posture	Skews the landscape of fascia, resulting in permanent compensations and immobility
Lack of flexibility, repetitive movements	Causes unnatural patterns & rigidity within fascia
Ignored injuries	Damages fibers and results in tight, dense adhesions throughout fascia



Think about having a "knot" in your neck from habitual sitting, or perhaps whiplash residuals from a car accident. Now imagine that knot in your fascia, yanking on every other fiber in the system, similar to the T-shirt example from Runner's World. Your entire body adapts to this

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inefficiency. Eventually, you will stand differently, run differently, carry things differently, and your body will begin to develop additional aches & pains. Our bodies are more adaptive than we realize. The job we have, the hobbies we take part in, the lack or excess of physical exercise, frequent mental or emotional stress, and many other factors can and will cause a response throughout our body. Whether you are stuck at a desk 9-5 and feel the pains of fascia as your posture adapts, or a marathon runner who has pushed through injuries and over-trained, or even an average person who may have gotten into a fender bender a few years ago...your fascia is responding to and fighting back against the negative inputs of your lifestyle.

Here is the good news out of all of this:

- We are learning more everyday about fascia's role in pain management, movement efficiency, and performance
- While it takes dedication, you can reverse the demerits of your fascia

If you're in constant pain or have an injury that has never healed, or perhaps you have inexplicable referred aches, don't be so quick to accept this discomfort as your new normal. We can, and will, get you back to pain free, unrestricted movement.

I embarked on a journey 2 years ago--following some ridiculous overtraining, totaling my car in a head on collision, having minor surgeries, pushing through injuries, and sustaining high levels of stress—to get back to waking up in the morning without pain, being able to exercise and be active without restrictions, reaching my personal goals, and most of all, be able to enjoy my life again. I've waited until now to share my experiences because for the first time since early 2011, I feel like my body is functioning as it should. I'm ready for my next challenge as a result of a holistic approach to recovery and training over the last few years, but I'm back on my feet today because of the focus & commitment I put towards restoring the messy world of my fascia.

Stay tuned for the next "OLLI: Daily" to learn how to start repairing and restoring your fascia.

Want info now?

Email me at cassie@OLLIFitness.com

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