# The Missing Link to Weight Loss?

For some men and women, diet and exercise is the most effective combination for successful weight loss. For others, it clearly is not enough. Medical researchers are taking a closer look at what is affecting the mortality of those who carry excess weight, specifically abdominal compartment syndrome or, to a milder degree, intra-abdominal hypertension.[1] Finding alternative ways to alleviate life-threatening high-pressure levels within the body could also be the missing link in successful weight loss when combined with a healthy diet and exercise regime. A better understanding of what is actually occurring when carrying excess weight could motivate those who have "tried everything" to adopt manual manipulation as a way to enhance overall results. Instead of focusing on training muscle to burn fat, perhaps attention should be refocused on the flexibility of ones connective tissue. This creates a platform suitable for the optimum conversion of fat and increased muscle development.

Understanding the function of connective tissue lies in recognizing part of its basic make-up. Most connective tissue fibers contain a ratio of collagen and elastin commonly found in our skin, fascia, ligaments, and tendons. When functioning optimally, connective tissue dictates our range of motion and maintains tissue boundaries within supple yet resilient limits. The soles of our hands and feet will never stretch to the same degree as our abdominal tissue, yet all of our intricate layers of skin, fat, and muscle can stretch and change shape, withstanding pressures and forces that literally keep us from falling apart. Used by surgeons because of its hardiness and relatively low biological maintenance, connective tissue is effective in

sealing lung tissue and replacing other permanently damaged ligaments that need to withstand tremendous amounts of force. However, when this limit is breached in certain areas, those who carry excess weight can experience serious consequences, such as hernias and abdominal dehiscence (the bursting of surgical incisions that fail to heal properly due to intra-abdominal pressure).[2]

While straining the boundaries of our connective tissues, the entire abdominal area is compromised by an overall lack of space. A hardened abdomen is not necessarily a sign of toned muscle tissue, but an indication that the inner organs are at risk, lacking sufficient space to function optimally. Motility within the intestines slows down and absorption of nutrients into the blood stream is less efficient, especially as fat adheres to intestinal walls. The bladder, liver, kidneys, and lungs are particularly sensitive to minor increases in pressure, prompting an all-to-common diagnosis of kidney, liver, or heart failure, when in fact, it is not necessarily the individual organ that is at fault. ER doctors have been urged to re-evaluate the protocol of immediately administering fluids to patients who carry excess weight, as the very treatment of hydration may further exacerbate organ failure.[1]

When we reach the uncomfortable point of over eating, pressure is released by means of belching, flatulence, or simply the natural call of our elimination system. Even a deep exhale can temporarily relieve a feeling of fullness. There is continually elimination of waste through our pores - when they are open. To insure this process is optimal requires a new physiological approach to our fitness routine, beginning our largest organ – the skin.

Dry brushing, in conjunction with bathing rituals, has been practiced for generations by Japanese cultures and documented historically in ancient Greek and

American Indian traditions. The Ayervedic system, a traditional Hindu medicinal practice, claims that dry scrubbing enhances circulation of the lymphatic system, our body's natural anti-inflammatory response. If the skin can 'breathe' better, dry scrubbing could very well enhance overall detoxification.

Before the skin is hydrated in the shower, a soft bristle brush is used for scrubbing, permanently eliminating a lotion routine after the shower. For those who carry excess weight, beginning with a soft cotton towel is initially the safest protocol, as skin disorders are one of the top ten life-threatening diseases of obesity due to inflammation and infection. Lending extra attention to the torso will eventually loosen the deeper layers constraining digestive organs. Following daily, multi-directional stimulation over both relaxed and contracted abdominal muscles, connective tissues may become more uniform, not only releasing once-restricted organs but toning areas that have been overstretched by excess weight. Combined with nutritional support and exercise, a slow and steady, yet significant weight loss may not even require surgical removal of excess skin.

A cross-training approach to the skin may further lead to evenly toned tissue development. After mobilizing and stretching the fascial layers of tissue, a slap to the skin results in reddening of the tissue. Repeated slapping will increase circulation and bring freshly oxygenated blood and lymphatic fluid to the skin's surface. Although not for the faint of heart, punching unwanted fat accumulations on the buttocks and legs towards the center of large muscle groups is not only beneficial for toning the lower body but during the process itself, strengthening the upper torso. The origin of this slightly more startling practice can be found in ancient traditions of Thai massage. Even Hollywood stars have discovered the art of Breast Slapping

treatments, augmenting breast tissue by temporarily increasing blood flow. Yet, it is the ancient practice of Butt Punching that could potentially eliminate the quick-fix fads of skin-clogging lotions and wraps and instead naturally speed up body contouring that occurs following consistent exercise.

Alternating scrubbing, slapping, and punching unwanted fatty deposits could not only aid the process of converting stagnant fat cells into healthy muscle tissue but also accelerate healing of necrotic tissue (areas where cells are dying often due to lack of circulation from intra-abdominal pressure). A relaxing abdominal self-massage would nicely complete this deeply physiological fitness routine and very likely aid in digestion. Tactile self-manipulation combined with the knowledge of these potential effects could be the first step towards mindfully regaining a lost trust in a body that has previously failed its owner.

For growing numbers, there exists a forgone acceptance that a person's size will hold them back from their intended purpose in life. Manual self-manipulation could be a truly profound psychotherapeutic process. Those who are ready to change may discover that their self-defeating mind-set has been naturally replaced with understanding and forgiveness.

Embrace it…and then let it go.

[1] Papyramidi, T.S., Marinis, A. D., Pliakos, J., Kesisoglou, I., Papayramidou, N. Abdominal compartment syndrome – Intra-abdominal hypertension: Defining, diagnosing, and managing *Journal of Emergencies, Trauma, and Shock,* 2011 Apr-Jun; 4(2): 279–291. DOI:10.4103/0974-2700.82224

[2] Regli, A., De Keulenaer, B., De laet, I., Derek J. Roberts, D.J., Dąbrowski, W., Malbrain, M. (2014). Fluid therapy and perfusional considerations during resuscitation in critically ill patients with intra-abdominal hypertension *Anesthesiology Intensive Therapy,* DOI: 10.5603/AIT.a2014.0067