**Injury Prevention and Massage Therapy**

Adequate recovery is essential if a runner is to benefit fully from training and prevent injuries from occurring. One way to hasten this recovery process is by using a regular massage therapy that can assist soft tissue recovery form intense exercise. After exercise, there is a prolonged elevation of muscle tone, felt as tightness, particularly during periods of adaptation to increased volume and intensity of training. This will cause impaired delivery of nutrients and oxygen to the cells and slow down removal of waste products which can contribute to abnormalities. It further limits the extensibility and shock absorbency of soft tissue, thus predisposing to soft tissue strain. Intense training also causes irritation of previously untreated lesions. This causes bulky scar tissue to develop, compromising muscle function and flexibility. This can lead to impaired training and progress to injuries.

The effect of the massage is to reduce excessive post-exercise muscle tone, increase muscle range of motion, increase circulation and nutrition to damaged tissue and deactivate trigger points. It also gives the physiotherapist time to identify any soft tissue abnormalities. It should form part of the warm-down program to maximize recovery for runners who need to exercise regularly. Massages should thus be done more often during peak training. Initially start with once a month and then more often (once a week), depending on the individual. When hill training and speed work forms part of training, massage therapy can be done more often.