

Mayer Fascia Wellness Guide

**A Guide to Evidence-Informed
Fascia Wellness
for
Pain Management
Including Your Personal Fascia
Health Checklist**

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Introduction

Thank you for downloading this guide! I'm so excited to share my knowledge with you!

For many people, including health practitioners, fascia is a new frontier in understanding the human body. I first learned about fascia nearly 30 years ago as a recent graduate, and I was immediately hooked. I was amazed at how it could help people with their pain, from those who had very simple to very complex issues. Many of the people I saw had tried other strategies, exhausting all their options without satisfying results. For some, medication helped, but they were fraught with side effects which left them looking for something more natural. Myofascial release was the answer for many of these clients.

I credit Dr. Manshadi, MD, for being very forward-thinking. He wanted to offer our often very complex patients nonmedication options for managing pain. His answer was encouraging us to learn and use Barnes's myofascial release. Over the past thirty years, I've continued learning, practicing, studying, and applying the Barnes myofascial release principles and techniques. I've integrated Barnes' ideas with my background as an occupational therapist, my expertise in posture and ergonomics, and my love of yoga, meditation, and natural movement.

Over the years, I have worked with countless clients who have found relief from their pain by integrating the Barnes approach of myofascial release with posture retraining, movement habit improvement, learning self-care strategies, and learning the basics of improved nutrition and hydration. Seeing the improvement in their quality of life motivates me to continue studying, learning, and creating content to reach more people.

I want to spread the word about how vital fascia is in overall health and how keeping it healthy can reduce and even eliminate pain. I hope that this uncomplicated look at fascia and how to apply the principles to self-care will support your healing and encourage you to consider your fascia when you create your personal wellness plan.



Fascia Wellness Checklist

This checklist is intended to create awareness about the lifestyle choices that influence the health of your fascia.

For each row, choose yes, no, or unsure. In the last column, write yes or no if you believe you can control this aspect of your life.

Fascia Wellness Activity	Yes	No	Unsure	I can control this aspect of my life. Write Yes or No for each.
I have a solid understanding of good posture and practice good posture most of the time, whether sitting or standing.				
Water is my primary drink of choice, and I know how much I should drink daily.				
I eat food that promotes healing and avoid foods that cause inflammation.				
I manage my stress. Over 70% of my day is calm.				
I move frequently throughout the day (at least 5 minutes each hour).				
I do exercise or movement that includes variety and full-body range of motion several times per week.				
I regularly do bodywork (deep stretching or pressure) myself or receive it from a practitioner.				

If you checked mostly "no" or "unsure," you can benefit from the information in this guide.

In the right-hand column, I hope you checked yes for every row. If you checked no, perhaps all you need is some helpful information and a guide.

Read on to learn more about each area and how you can take the first steps to improve the health of your fascia and your entire body.

Why Your Fascia is So Important

I approach wellness through the lens of fascia. Our fascia provides the support and structure our body needs to function. It surrounds and supports all our body systems and has been dubbed by fascia researchers as the unifying system or environment of all the body systems.

Our fascia is an amazing structure that provides the input we need to feel our bodies' position and balance. It is also a protective mechanism that is called to action to minimize damage during trauma which can be instantaneous, as in the case of a fall or surgical incision, or long-term trauma, as in the case of years of poor posture and sedentary lifestyles.

When we experience trauma of any kind, our fascia tightens in response. When our fascia is tight, it puts pressure on other body systems causing sensations of pain, tension, or imbalance. Tension in the fascia can also prevent other body systems from working properly.

What other body systems are we talking about?

- Muscular System
- Skeletal System
- Circulatory System
- Respiratory System
- Nervous System
- Lymphatic System
- Reproductive System
- Digestive System

Imagine if any of these systems were experiencing pressure from tight fascia or a tight band of fascia cut off their source of nutrition. Are you experiencing unexplained symptoms? Exploring the possibility of tension in the fascia is worth your time.

Our modern-day lifestyles must include bodywork, attention to posture, natural movement, stress management, and good nutrition to keep our fascia and, therefore, our bodies healthy.

The healthiest, most resilient bodies are strong, flexible, and well-aligned. Keeping your fascia healthy means integrating the strategies found in this guide to keep the tension out and the pressure off all your other systems.

Fascia is a continuous 3-dimensional web throughout your entire body surrounding and supporting every other structure in your body.

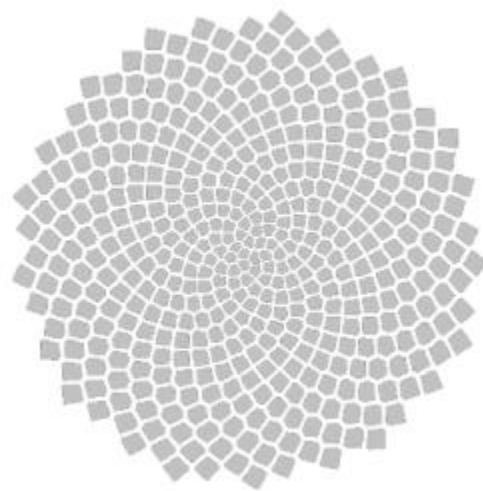
Fascia and Pain

It is estimated that 50 million adults in the United States have chronic pain, with approximately 19 million experiencing what is referred to as high-impact pain. This type of pain is so significant that it interferes with normal daily life activities or work activities. The Integrative Branch of the National Institute of Health has a special initiative that started in 2020 that includes looking more closely at fascia strategies to better research related pain issues and how to evaluate and treat these issues. Why?

Current research shows that your fascia has over six times more nerves than your muscular system! That means your brain is very concerned about what is happening in your fascia! As described earlier, a build-up of tension in the fascia can place tension on the nerves embedded within it. When fascia is healthy, it will stretch, and all the layers will effortlessly glide over one another. When tight, there is less gliding and stretch; consequently, the nerves and all other structures cannot move easily or behave normally. This often results in pain.

The Many Roles of Fascia

Keeping your fascia healthy is important for many reasons beyond managing pain. Your fascia plays important roles in balance, feeling what is happening inside your body, self-regulation, smooth and efficient movement, and protection from trauma. These functions go beyond the scope of this guide, but you can learn more about fascia in other resources available at the end of this guide.



What You Can Start Doing Today

You don't have to make all the changes at once. Choose what feels like the best place to start for you. Taking on many changes at once can be overwhelming and discourage you from moving forward. Start small and you'll soon be reaping the benefits.

Posture and Body Alignment

Posture choices (conscious and unconscious) influence the alignment of our bodies. Alignment is how our skeletal system is shaped. We are designed to be symmetrical in our shoulders, arms, hips, legs, and feet. We are designed to stack up straight against gravity, meaning our heads should be balanced over our feet. We also need appropriate spinal curves for our best health and ability to function.

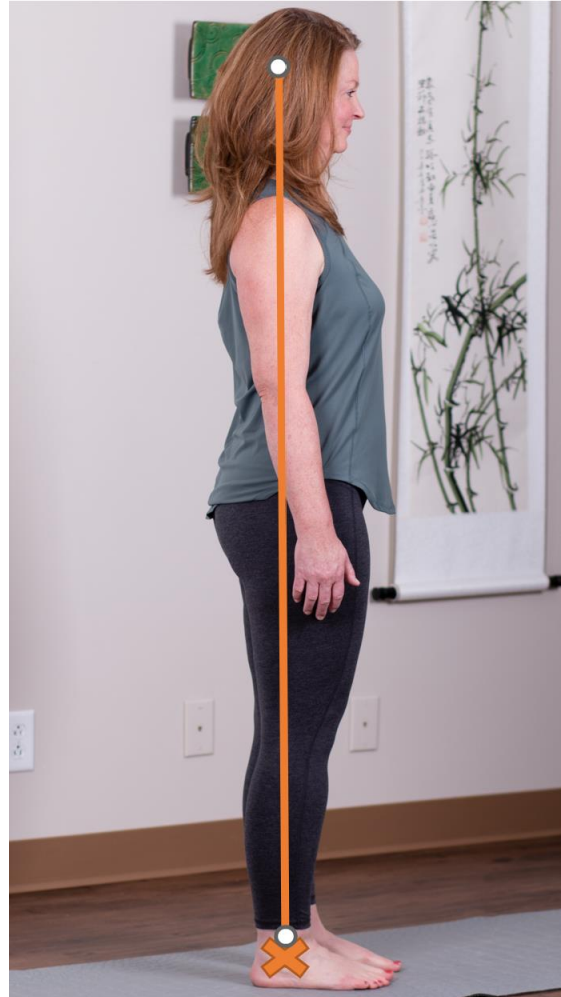
Our healthcare system does not place nearly enough emphasis on posture. When we are aligned as we are designed, our fascia can function normally (stretchy yet supportive). In turn, all our other body systems surrounded and supported by the fascia can function normally, resulting in better health and wellness. Poor posture over time results in thick, tight, and sticky fascia.

Attention to posture during sitting, standing, and movement is extremely important for long-term wellness. There are many details to good posture. To get you started, I will provide a few important tips and thoughts to help it make sense.

- Stand with your feet pointing forward and most of your weight in your heels. For many people, this feels very unnatural. Look at the bones of the foot. What makes more sense to support the body under the weight of gravity? Should the large bone of the heel on the back of the foot take the load or all the little bones in the front? I hope the answer is obvious.



- Notice the orange "X" at the ankle. This is an important landmark for organizing your posture. Once you are placing the weight properly in your feet, imagine a straight line up from the ankle. You should place the following landmarks in that line. Start with the outside of the knee joint. The next landmark is the outside joint of the hip. Next is the outside of the shoulder joint. Finally, the opening of the ear. If they are all in the imaginary line you created when looking at yourself from both sides, you're on the right path. I suggest you have a friend take a picture of you from both sides so you can thoroughly analyze this yourself.
- Finally, elongate yourself along that line, then soften your body. Allowing yourself to sink into poor posture not only creates poor alignment but also compresses your organs over time. Losing height as we age is associated with poor organ function!
- There are several additional landmarks, more than 15 actually, to think about when improving the posture, but if you can get these challenges accomplished, you are making huge strides toward improving your health.



Movement

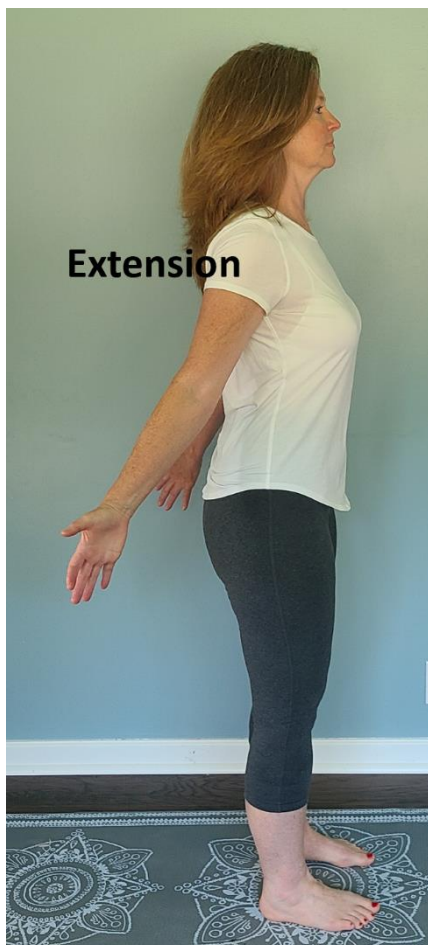
We are designed to move. Unfortunately, we don't move in ways that keep our fascia healthy. Jobs are often sedentary, and our exercise choices occur during limited times and are limited in variety of motion and end-range movement. To create a healthy, resilient, and functionally fit body, we must move often throughout the day and challenge our bodies with a variety of movement. Variety and challenge will keep our fascia healthy.

Fascia researchers recommend yoga as a great exercise choice to keep your fascia healthy. However, you do NOT have to do yoga to have a healthy body. Rather, let's talk about the components of yoga that are good for your fascia. The components can be woven into a very basic exercise plan.

Fascia-focused components of yoga:

- Variety: Yoga offers a tremendous variety of movement options and combinations. There are many styles of yoga to choose from.
- Stretching: Yoga offers long-held stretches.
- End range movements: Yoga includes movements that challenge both extension or long open movements and compression or closed small movements.
- Balance: Balance is a very important component of yoga and is regularly incorporated into any yoga practice.
- Stabilization: Creating a strong and stable pose is often incorporated into many yoga practices.

The fascia must be moved regularly and with variety to maintain its stretch and glide. If you can find a way to incorporate these components into your day, you are on the right track! If you want to learn more about how to move better, see the resources at the end of this guide.



Stress Management

In our culture, we are ruled by stress. It has become a badge of honor to be busy. Unfortunately, persistent stress puts our bodies into a constant state of low-level fight or flight, creating tremendous tension in our fascia and putting pressure on other body systems, slowly destroying our health and quality of life. We must learn to manage our stress. Each of us may prefer a different strategy to release our tension. Some may prefer a body-focused approach, while others may prefer a meditative approach.

Yoga also gets a nod for incorporating relaxation and meditation into most styles, but yoga isn't necessary for managing stress. There are many styles of meditation as well. The common component is mindfulness, staying present, and not letting your mind drift into the past or future with worries you cannot control.

One more must-do for managing stress is to learn to breathe with your diaphragm. If this is new to you, please [go to my website and watch my video on how to breathe with your diaphragm](#). If you do nothing else in this guide, please do this.

Hydration and Nutrition

Highly processed food has become the norm in our culture. Our bodies respond better to foods that are minimally processed. With fast-paced lifestyles, this is a considerable challenge for many. Doing our best to choose foods that support health contributes to our quality of life. To support healing, we must reduce inflammation. The biggest contributor to creating inflammation in our bodies is sugar. If you can minimize sugar, you are off to a great start. If you want to keep going, minimize highly refined or processed foods. Instead, choose as many whole foods as possible.

When it comes to hydration, we need plenty of water. Our bodies rely on water for life! According to most experts, women need about 11 cups daily, and men 15. This, of course, varies with exercise and other factors such

as pregnancy, etc. The important aspect I want to share is that drinking water alone won't hydrate us completely. Our fascia acts much like a sponge. To fully hydrate our fascia, we need to move. Movement helps wring the old water out of our fascia to make room for fresh water. Compression and elongation of our muscles and fascia are extremely important for total hydration. Twists are helpful too. Without movement, much of the water we drink will go right through us.

Bodywork

Bodywork is a part of almost every culture in the world. We often need the help of others to heal and be well. Regular myofascial bodywork helps to remove the tension that our modern life puts into our bodies. The current research points to the principles of Barnes style of myofascial release to actually release fascia. If you want to find a Barnes approach myofascial release therapist in your area, [check the directory](#). If you don't have a Barnes-trained therapist near you, any gentle bodywork will help to get the fluids moving and the tissues relaxing. However, they may not directly target the fascia so consider the next best option: self-care.

Since not everyone has a Barnes therapist near them or has the time and resources to receive regular work, the next best answer is to learn how to integrate myofascial release techniques into your self-care routine. The research tells us that using soft tools to press into the body helps to release tension in the fascia. Using hard tools such as foam rollers and balls can do more harm than good. Placing a soft ball in any area of tension can help to ease the tension and release the pain.

I hold a monthly workshop to help my clients learn how to do their own myofascial self-care. I have several resources you can use as well. Go to the resources at the end of this guide to learn more.



Conclusion

I hope you've learned at least one thing to help you get on the path to healthier fascia and, in turn, a healthier body and less pain. I genuinely hope your mind has been blown by how simple it really is to create a healthier body and how important fascia is to managing and eliminating pain.

A common question in my workshops is, "how long do I have to keep doing self-care?". The answer is fairly simple. As long as life keeps putting tension into our bodies through poor posture, lack of movement, poor diet and hydration, and stress, we will continue to have tension and pain. It is up to each of us to find the right balance between how we live our lives and how we chase out the tension.

I love to work one on one with clients. Sorting out the just-right balance and helping a client eliminate pain brings me so much joy. However, my time is limited, so I've created many resources for people to learn these important skills on their own. I also create resources for therapists to help others. Once again, go to the end of this guide to learn more about my available resources.

Resources from Mayer Fascia Wellness

Improve Your Posture

- [Set up a one-on-one consultation.](#)
- [Take an online self-paced class.](#)

Learn to Move Better

- [Set up a one-on-one consultation.](#)
- [Take an online self-paced class.](#)

Reduce Your Stress

- [Find or create a yoga practice right for you.](#)
- [Learn to breathe better.](#)

Find a Barnes-Trained Myofascial Therapist

- [Myofascial Release Directory](#)

Learn Myofascial Self-Care

- [Take an online self-paced class.](#)
- [Come to Omaha to take the workshop.](#)
- [Find my Kindle Book on Amazon](#)

Learn More About Fascia

- [MayerWellness.com](#)

Are you an occupational therapist or another type of health or wellness professional? I love teaching other providers how to integrate fascia wellness research, principles, and practices into their work with client and patients. [Visit my website and click on Fascia for Health and Wellness Pros. Hope to see you there!](#)

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