



# TAPE IT GOOD

## Physically Speaking

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Tape has been widely used for many years by certified athletic trainers and physiotherapists in the rehabilitation, prevention, and management of a wide variety of sports injuries and disorders. Tape is a strong, supportive, lightweight and temporary support. It conforms to the contours and movement of the body.

Tape is used for many different reasons:

- Reduce Pain
- Optimize joint alignment
- Unload irritable or painful tissue, like muscles, tendons, fascia and nerves
- Protect and help wounds heal faster
- Control internal swelling and bleeding
- Protect joints and soft tissues
- Provide mechanical stability
- Improve proprioception (joint awareness) and balance
- Neuromuscular effects- helps to relax overactive muscles and activate muscles that are not firing
- Facilitate safe return to sport



Tennis and Sport  
Photos: Getty Images



### TAPE ON TOUR

Many different types of tape exist for many different purposes. Tape varies in strength, material, width and tension. Your Primary Health Care Provider (PHCP) will determine which tape is necessary for you depending on the location, severity and type of injury, type of structures involved and the reason for taping.

Some examples of tapes used on the WTA:

**PRE-WRAP:** is used under athletic tape to help eliminate skin irritation.

**RIGID ATHLETIC TAPES:** These are preferred for joint injuries, such as sprains, or conditions that need support and immobilization. They include regular white cloth athletic tapes and brown tapes. The stronger brown tapes and Endura® tapes are designed for specific taping techniques, like joint-realignment.

**MOLESKIN:** is a non-stretch, adhesive felt which makes joint tape stronger and provides reinforcement, for example in an arch support tape. Moleskin may also be used for temporary equipment repairs.

**POROUS FLEXIBLE TAPE:** These conform to all body surfaces and are suitable for areas that need flexibility while providing light support. They have gentle adhesives for sensitive skin. They are used under stronger brown tapes to protect the skin and adhere the tape, or as a cover tape for wound and blister dressings. Examples are Fix-a-Mull® or Cover-Roll®.

**ELASTIC TAPE:** Examples are Lightplast® Pro and Elastikon®. These elastic adhesive tapes have a fabric backing that permits some flexibility and movement, so that muscles can contract and relax while still being supported. The thicker Elastikon® is suitable when strong support and compression is required for injury protection.

**SELF ADHERENT TAPE:** This tape contains a cohesive material that sticks only to itself. Coban® is an example. It is excellent as a bandage for acute injuries, like sprained ankles, as it provides compression to reduce swelling.

**KINESIO® TAPE:** This is a cloth tape with acrylic glue that allows for ventilation, good adhesion with minimal negative skin reactions. The elastic pattern moves with the skin and allows normal movement. It is water and sweat resistant so it can be kept on to shower and bathe.

Kinesio® tape has several effects:

- Restores and normalizes muscles damaged by overuse or injury. It supports injured muscles and assists in conditioning weakened muscles.
- Normalizes the space between the skin and muscles and promotes the flow of lymphatic fluid and blood. This helps relieve fluid congestion, tissue tightness and pain from an injury.
- Reduces pain by decreasing the activity of pain receptors.
- Unlike other tapes, Kinesio® Tape is best applied and left in place for 2-5 days as it assists the injured muscles to function and heal. The PHCPs will advise when it can be removed.





## TIP-TOP TAPING TECHNIQUES

### WHEN TO TAPE

If you know you have an injury and need tape or use tape regularly for prevention, please see the PHCP in the training room for tape **BEFORE** you go to court!! This is an important part of your match preparation.

- There are many effective taping techniques. Try tape before practice to allow you to find the method that works best for you and your condition. This also helps you adjust to playing with tape.
- Timing is important. Be in the training room when the first set of the match prior to yours is over. An early retirement or walkover could change your match schedule. Be taped and prepared to play!
- As part of your treatment plan, the PHCPs may advise you keep your tape on overnight to help healing, support, or alignment.
- Tape can work...even after it is removed! This carry-over effect occurs because receptors in your skin, joints, and soft tissue remain activated. This enhances the function, body awareness, balance and flexibility of the affected part.



### APPLICATION AND REMOVAL OF TAPE

**APPLICATION:** To ensure that the tape stays on:

- The area must be dry, clean, and free of body hair and of creams (like moisturizer and massage lotion). Clean your skin with alcohol or soap and water prior to tape application.
- Skin Prep Protective Spray is a product that protects the skin from irritation, reduces friction, and assists in tape adhesion. It is applied to the skin before the adherent.
- Tape adherent helps to bond the tape to the skin. It helps the tape stay in place!



**REMOVAL:** To ensure you protect your skin:

- Gently and slowly pull the skin from the tape, not the tape from the skin. The tape must not be jerked or ripped off as this may tear skin and cause further problems and open wounds.
- Tape Cutters or "Sharks" and tape scissors are specifically designed tools to safely remove tape. They have a blunt nose and lower blade that slips under the tape without cutting the skin. **TIP:** To properly remove ankle tape, start at the upper inside leg, go behind the ankle bone & forward towards the big toe along the inside sole of the foot.
- Chemical Solvents such as "Adhesive Tape Remover" or "De-Adhesive" are pads that come in small packets and are found in the training room. These help dissolve the glue on the tape.

### PROTECT YOUR SKIN!

Frequent taping may irritate your skin. To keep your skin healthy, frequent tapers should remove their tape soon after matches or practice sessions. An antibiotic ointment, such as Bacitracin®, available from the PHCPs can help soothe the area and assists to heal your skin overnight while you sleep.

If you experience any of the following, please consult with your doctor or PHCP as soon as possible:

**SKIN ALLERGIES:** Some people are allergic to tape or the glue used on the tape. If you feel itchy or your skin becomes red and inflamed, remove the tape immediately as you may be having a skin reaction.

**SKIN CHAFING:** Results when a taped area rubs against skin. It often occurs on the thighs or between toes. To prevent chafing, apply a reasonable amount of skin lubricant to the body part and the tape.

**BLISTERS & LACERATIONS:** Improper application or removal of tape can cause blisters or small skin cuts.



### TAPE IS PART OF A TREATMENT PLAN...

Tape is ONE part in the rehabilitation of an injury; it is not the whole solution! The PHCPs are experienced practitioners who will select from a variety of treatment techniques to enhance your rehabilitation. To maximize the benefits you get from tape, the PHCP will prescribe exercises that aim to improve the stability of the taped structures and strengthen any underlying weaknesses. The PHCPs will also determine what other treatment methods are appropriate for your condition. For example, they may use manual therapy techniques or suggest stroke analysis to address the underlying cause.

- **EVERY ATHLETE IS DIFFERENT.** The PHCPs understand the demands of tennis and will use a tape technique that is the most appropriate for your injury and your game. They may modify the standard tape technique for your individual needs. Give them feedback on the tape technique so they can make any adjustments to provide the support you need on the court.
- **TAPE IS NOT A "QUICK FIX"...** When an injury is too severe, **NO** tape will protect a player from the risk of further injury or longer recovery time. Players who return prematurely to competition (=before their rehabilitation is finished and their strength and stability can meet match-play demands) are more likely to get re-injured, even when taped.
- **PREPARATION IS IMPORTANT.** Get the support you need, to help you succeed.