

If you watched the 2008 Beijing Olympics, you may have seen Kerri Walsh playing beach volleyball for the United States. You may have also noticed the tape on her shoulder. Many people originally believed it was to cover a tattoo, but actually she was using a specially designed elastic taping technique to reduce her pain levels from a previous rotator cuff repair. This elastic taping technique, called Kinesio Tape, was developed almost 30 years ago by a Chiropractic Physician by the name of Dr. Kenzo Kase. I recently had the opportunity to work with one of Dr. Kase's understudies, Jim Wallis, who is also the head athletic trainer for Portland State University. Jim Wallis has also written multiple books on Kinesio Taping and collaborated with Dr. Kase on the development of the tapes properties.

Kinesio Tape is now being used by some of the best athletes in the world such as Lance Armstrong, Serena Williams, David Beckham and many of the current Olympians. Kinesio Tape works by giving support like a flexible brace and facilitates weak muscles with neurological awareness or proprioception.

In Lance Armstrong's book "Every Second Counts", he refers to Kinesio Tape as "Something better than any laser, wrap, or electric massager...The Tape. It is a special hot-pink athletic tape that came from Japan and seemed to have special powers. Every morning before the stage, they would tape us all up, different parts of our bodies . . . George's back, Chechu's knees. Sometimes we'd be so wrapped up in hot-pink tape that we'd look like dolls, a bunch of broken dolls. But the next day the pain disappeared-it was gone."

Well, there is actually a science behind why the tape works and it's not "special powers" as Lance Armstrong described it. The Kinesio Tape is used to address muscle spasms, muscle inhibition, muscle contractures, joint hypermobility, joint hypomobility and regional swelling. Since the tape has an elastic quality, it allows the practitioner to use different tensions, widths, lengths, and patterns that are not achievable with normal white athletic tape. It's adhesive properties and ability to repel water allows it to be worn for 3-4 days. This is another key component to Kinesio Tape that is not found in athletic tape. These key components of the tape allowed Dr. Kenzo Kase to deliver a treatment method that would give patients continuous benefits between appointment visits.

So now you know that if you see patients around the clinic with crazy taping designs, it's not for looks. There is a purpose for the tape. I have already had multiple patients benefit from the taping technique to relieve knee pain, back pain, and chronic swelling in the short time that I have been using these techniques. Though there may not be a long term benefit, it can be used for a short term fix to allow patients to continue to be active while reducing their pain levels.

I have included a few links below of athletes in the news that have been using Kinesio Tape:
[David Beckham](#)

[Serena Williams](#)

[Kerri Walsh](#)

[Edgarrin James](#)

-Josh Kernen, PT, DPT, CSCS