

# Injury Rehabilitation and Prevention

Although some people would call me an over-analyzer, I like to consider myself a thorough researcher. For instance, I won't buy something without doing adequate comparisons whether it's a car, laptop computer, or GPS system. Similarly, when I go to a physician, a veterinarian, or even to a mechanic, I do my research to make sure I'm getting the best possible care and expertise. I call it Due Diligence. That's where Dr. Martin Skopp comes into the picture.

I discovered Dr. Skopp after relocating to Washington, DC. As any bodybuilder knows (or should know), a quality chiropractor is an essential cornerstone of your health-maintenance team. If you lift long enough - you WILL get injured. Once I began my research, it became clear very quickly that Dr. Skopp was the man for the job. While he has been an invited speaker, featured in magazines, and received numerous awards, it was his extensive involvement and knowledge in dealing with athletes in particular that I found appealing. Also, very importantly, he has to be what I consider to be the "Trifecta" of being an expert in traditional chiropractic care, Active Release Techniques (ART), and Sound Assisted Soft Tissue Mobilization (SASTM), which I've found to together greatly facilitate the healing and prevention of injury. I asked him to sit down for an interview and tell us a little about his practice.

**Jason Wojo: Let's begin by telling our readers a little about yourself and your credentials.**

**Dr. Martin Skopp:** I received my doctorate of chiropractic from the Los Angeles College of Chiropractic in 1991 then went on to attain a postgraduate degree from the American Board of Chiropractic Sports Physicians (ACBSP) as a Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician (CCSP). Sorry about the alphabet soup there! I also specialize in SASTM techniques and have been an ART instructor for 8 years.

**JW: Why did you choose to pursue chiropractic care as a career?**

**DMS:** I've always had an interest in health care. Back in 1986, I met a sports chiropractor at a triathlon in which I was competing. We became friends and I eventually became his patient after suffering a running injury. After being exposed to all the amazing aspects to his sports practice, my views of what I thought a chiropractor did completely changed. I began to understand that sports chiropractors were treating much more than back injuries contrary to popular belief. They were caring for the entire body. The approach also had a preventive aspect to it. The idea that you could help someone stay well (or injury free) was very appealing to me. It was at that point that I knew I wanted to be a sports chiropractor.

**JW: Do you specialize in a certain patient population?**

**DMS:** Yes. I generally work with a fairly motivated healthy population with an emphasis on sports medicine.

**JW: That seems to be a rarity from what I've seen. What made you decide to focus on that group of patients?**

**DMS:** I've found that sport and exercise has made a huge difference throughout my life. I have competed in marathons and triathletes, and appreciate how much sports can influence one's development and outlook on life in general. Looking around, you can see the effects in others as well. I am passionate about helping people achieve their athletic goals as well as keeping them healthy and exercising. Athletes derive great benefit from the soft tissue work (ART, SASTM) and the chiropractic that I do.

**JW: Speaking of ART and SASTM, could you tell us a little about these techniques?**

**DMS:** Sure. ART is a patented, state of the art soft tissue system. It's a movement based hands-on technique that treats problems with muscles, tendons, ligaments, fascia and nerves. Things like headaches, back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, shin splints, shoulder pain, sciatica, plantar fasciitis, knee problems, and tennis elbow are just a few of the many conditions that can be resolved with ART.

In response to acute injury (pulls, tears, etc), over-use injuries that cause micro-trauma, or hypoxia (not getting enough oxygen to the soft tissues), your body produces tough, dense scar tissue in the affected area. This scar tissue binds up and ties down tissues that need to move freely. As scar tissue builds up, muscles become shorter and weaker, tension on tendons causes tendonitis, and nerves can become trapped. This can cause reduced range of motion, loss of strength, and pain. Using

manual techniques, I can evaluate and treat abnormal tissues by combining precisely directed tension with very specific patient movements.

SASTM (developed by David Graston) is a method of using specific manual tools to further breakup myofascial adhesions. This treatment is a very useful adjunct to other manual treatments such as ART and chiropractic.

**JW: Don't forget to mention how pleasant ART and SASTM treatments are to have performed.**

**DMS:** (Laughing) Yes they can be slightly uncomfortable at times.

**JW: How much time does an appointment usually take?**

**DMS:** I don't use a factory or cookie cutter approach to my patients. People come to my office with different problems. The first appointment is assessment, treatment and getting to know the person. I will spend about 30 - 45 minutes of doctor/patient time on the first visit. On subsequent visits, when I hopefully have a better handle on the problem, it should only take 15 - 20 minutes for treatment. Of course, these are only estimates; I try to take whatever time is needed to fix the problem.

**JW: How many treatments does it take to see progress on an average injury?**

**DMS:** It is very common to see most soft tissue injuries significantly improve or resolve within the first few visits. A perceivable improvement in function (nerve and muscle) and/or movement can be accomplished sometimes in the first visit.

**JW: So you believe that a combination of multiple approaches is ideal during treatment?**

**DMS:** Absolutely. I have found the combination of ART, SASTM, and chiropractic is very powerful and has a synergistic effect. The whole is much better than the sum of its parts.

**JW: Since this article is primarily aimed towards bodybuilders and powerlifters, could you tell us a little about injuries you commonly see in these populations?**

**DMS:** Bodybuilders and powerlifters train repetitively to accomplish their goals. This kind of intense training puts a severe and constant strain on one's fascial and muscular systems. This strain is translated into tightness of the soft tissues, which in turn causes weakness and inhibits the ability for quality training. Also, this tightness and weakness can easily set up an injury due to biomechanical compensation and poor technique. Knee, shoulder, elbow, neck and low back injuries in particular seem to be most prevalent among weight trainers. Unfortunately, many such injuries could have been prevented by having a pliable myofascial system.

**JW: Are there certain exercises you've found to be biomechanically unsound that you see a lot of injuries from?**

**DMS:** The bigger problem isn't a particular exercise as much as it is from an unbalanced program. Primary muscle movers and supportive muscles both need to be worked. Yes, those primary movers may help you win competitions, but it is the lesser-known supportive muscles that allow you to train harder and stay injury free. For example, the subscapularis and infraspinatus are very important in shoulder stabilization by helping the humerus glide downward in the joint. If they are weak and/or tight a shoulder impingement can occur. Such an injury could be easily prevented by doing rotator cuff exercises while training shoulders. Don't neglect stabilizer muscles.

**JW: In the event one was to acquire an injury, how would they know it might be treatable by someone like yourself versus going to a traditional MD?**

**DMS:** When it comes to the musculoskeletal system, ART practitioners are the experts. When someone comes into my practice that either doesn't respond to treatment or after the initial assessment I feel another health practitioner would be more appropriate, you will be referred. Your injury will either resolve, improve to your satisfaction, or you will be referred to another health practitioner who we think can help you.

**JW: Some people seem to have reservations about the utility of chiropractic care. What would you say to those people?**

**DMS:** Chiropractic has been well researched for safety and efficacy. People who come up with unfounded excuses not to seek the very best in neuromusculoskeletal care are only denying themselves the chance to get better. When you add in the benefits

of ART and SASTM soft tissue treatment, chiropractic is even further enhanced. The joints and bones move much easier and the adjustments hold better because the soft tissues that move and stabilize them have been freed. As such, the number of subsequent adjustments needed for stabilization is dramatically reduced. Besides, who else is effectively treating myofascial adhesions, the cause of the vast number of injuries?

**JW: Related to that point, how does one go about finding a qualified chiropractor that also has experience in the ?**

**DMS:** I always refer people to the ART website, [www.ActiveRelease.com](http://www.ActiveRelease.com) to find a chiropractor that does ART. Then I check the American Chiropractic Council on Sports Injury and Physical Fitness site at [www.acasc.org](http://www.acasc.org) and finally [www.amerchiro.org](http://www.amerchiro.org). Also don't forget that asking people you trust for recommendations is a good way to find a good anything.

**JW: Thank you for your time Dr. Skopp. We appreciate you sharing your insight and knowledge with us.**

**DMS:** It's been my pleasure.

*Skopp Chiropractic is located in Alexandria, VA. Check out [www.skoppchiro.com](http://www.skoppchiro.com) for more details on Dr. Skopp's practice. His office number is (703) 721-9600, or you can reach him via email at [ironchiro@aol.com](mailto:ironchiro@aol.com).*