THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
Myotherapy and Remedial Massage
What is the Difference Between Myotherapy and Remedial Massage?

We can only imagine how difficult life must have been for the sick a hundred or more years ago. When they were sick they had very limited treatment options.

Medicine has come a long way in the past century, which has resulted in faster treatments and a record number of people living to 100.

However, it can be confusing knowing which option to go for. Back then, no matter the pain, everyone went to see the doctor, just one type of doctor.

Now, consider the field of manual therapies alone. If you are currently experiencing muscle pain, you might be spoilt for choice.

Should you see a GP, a chiropractor, an osteopath, a physiotherapist or a myotherapist? Or should you just have a massage and call it a day?

After all, they all do the same thing, don’t they? Not at all.

The different fields of medicine exist for a reason. While some of their jobs may overlap, they all specialise in some aspects more than others.

Muscle pain and treatment in particular is the forte of myotherapists; the name gives it away. Myo means muscle.

But remedial massage therapy also deals with muscle-treatment. What gives?
What is Myotherapy and What is Remedial Massage Therapy?

Myotherapy is a branch of manual medicine focused on the musculoskeletal system: the way it works, what causes pain and how it is healed. As a means of curing muscle related imbalances, myotherapists will often use remedial massage.

Remedial massage is a way of assessing the behaviour and health of muscles, which provides treatment by way of hands-on techniques.

Remedial massage therapy isn’t quite a developed branch of medicine on its own, but is rather one of the tools of myotherapists and some other manual health practitioners.
The theory of trigger points is a long-contested one. It takes a degree of specialisation to not only identify them, but to know which one links to pains along the fascial system.

For this, you need a degree.

In order to become a myotherapist, you must first have a degree in remedial massage therapy. A high level certificate or a diploma in remedial massage therapy would do.

Given its medical lineage, myotherapists often have to learn a number of disciplines including anatomy and physiology.
Modalities of Myotherapy

When it comes to the process, myotherapists use more advanced techniques than remedial massage therapists.

Their modalities include:

**Soft Tissue Therapy** – this is a process of using the hands to locate the specific areas the pain is emanating from. In order to accomplish this, any of the following techniques might be used:

- Therapeutic massage
- Muscle energy techniques
- Neuromuscular techniques
- Positional release techniques
- Myofascial release techniques
- Trigger point therapy
- Lymphatic drainage techniques
- Joint mobilisation

**Temperature Therapy** – also known as hot and cold compresses. The technique involves the usage of either thermal therapy (warm) or cryotherapy (cold).

Thermal therapy is used to help muscles relax and calm taut joints. When patients exhibit muscle stiffness, aches and spasms, this is often utilised.

It is also used in the treatment of:

- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Osteoarthritis
- Neck pain
- Back pain
- Fibromyalgia

Cryotherapy is used to reduce inflammation or to numb pain. It is also used in the treatment of the conditions listed above.

If you’ve ever had a swelling on your body and you wanted it to go down, you may have used an ice pack. Strains from excessive exercise are also often treated with cryotherapy.
**Electromechanical Stimulation** – this involves the application of electrical currents or soundwaves to heal or alleviate pain.

Different techniques and equipment used include:

- Therapeutic ultrasound
- Low level laser therapy
- TENS therapy
- Interferential technique

EMS is also used by doctors to treat various myocardial tissue. The modality can be quite complicated, thus requiring extensive study.

**Myofascial Dry Needling (MDN)** – also known as dry needling, is a method of applying fine filiform needles into the trigger points for immediate pain relief.

It is an approach used in acupuncture and a few other therapies.

**Myofascial Stretching** – when muscles are unnaturally shortened, myofascial stretching is used to elongate them and return them to normal. It also improves joint mobility.

- Stretching techniques include:
  - Proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation stretching (PNF)
  - Dynamic stretching
  - Static stretching

Besides these treatments, myotherapists also prescribe various rehabilitative exercises. For the procedures to work, the patient would need to abstain from the activities that caused them in the first place.
How the Consultation Works

It might be a bit weird for a therapist to walk you into their office, undress you and start massaging your body, even though it might feel great.

Myotherapy and remedial massage are intended to relieve pains, but in order to do that, the therapists must first know what you are going through.

*It is important to draw a distinction also between a regular massage and a remedial massage. While the former can be done at your leisure, the latter is designed mainly to heal and reenergise.

During your first visit, the myotherapist will get a detailed record of your medical history. You should also expect to be asked about your work – what you do, how you do it and how often.

You will also be asked about your home-life and other activities you do. The therapist’s aim is to identify the source of your pain, or the actions contributing to it.

A history of past injuries will also be requested. Then, you would need to do a physical examination, and if need be, range of motion testing and orthopaedic testing.

This will help identify not only the cause, but the areas of the pain. You will then be told about the course of treatment, exercises you should or shouldn’t do and other activities that will help keep you in top health.

Every treatment is tailor-made for the patient, as every injury is unique.
Major Differences Between Myotherapy and Remedial Massage
Myotherapists are More Qualified Than Remedial Massage Therapists
The diploma in remedial massage therapy can be covered in under two years of full-time study.

Myotherapy requires two to four years of study at a recognised tertiary institution. But that’s not all.

As with other physical therapies, continuous education and training is required. Myotherapists have to undergo 20-40 hours of accredited programs each year to improve their skills.

As a continually evolving field, practitioners of Myotherapy are required to be up to date with the latest methods, concepts and treatments.
Myotherapists Use a Broader Range of Tools, Techniques and Assessment Methods
Given their longer periods of study and broader objectives, myotherapists are equipped to use more tools than remedial massage therapists.

Remedial massage therapists usually treat conditions that have already been diagnosed, or general sports injuries. They also deal with non-specific injuries such as tightness and soreness.

Though the founder of Myotherapy started it as a hands-only approach, it has advanced quickly over the years.

Remedial massage therapists adopt the classical approach of only using their hands to treat pains, with the occasional assistance of oils and creams.

The range of techniques used by myotherapists have been mentioned above. The broader range of options is helpful for patients who don't respond to some forms of treatment.

For example, myotherapists use trigger point therapy, also known as myofascial trigger points.

These sensitive spots or hyperirritable spots in the fascia are soothed by the skilled hands of a myotherapist to alleviate pain.

Fascia are connective tissues that wrap most of the structures in the body, including organs and muscles. The technique comes in handy in particular when the pain is difficult to explain, or seemingly emanating on its own.

This is just one of the developing fields in Myotherapy which requires practitioners to constantly improve their skills.
Myotherapy involves a more holistic approach.
Remedial massage therapists are trained to deal with the issue at hand. Where there is a pain, they handle it.

Myotherapy on the other hand, considers not just the pain, but the effect on the whole body, and the effect of the whole body’s activities on the pain.

This is the reason why the consultative process is very thorough. The myotherapists needs to ensure that all possible referred pains are dealt with.

There is therefore an element of prevention in the myotherapist’s job. Once a pain is dealt with, any other pains that could’ve come up should be addressed as well.

This and other reasons are why myotherapists are able to deal with a broader range of myofascial pains and diseases than remedial massage therapists.
Myotherapists Can Offer a Broader Consultative Plan
When studying to be a myotherapist, a student’s knowledge of other fields of medicine comes in handy. The best myotherapists study anatomy, physiotherapy, physiology, and even cardiology and mental health.

The outcome is a professional able to recommend rehabilitation plans that cover diet, exercise and psychological considerations.

Pains can be induced by stress, excessive strain or poor appetite. Knowing how to identify the cause is just the beginning of the process; they must also be able to provide a solution.

When you are done with your treatments, the myotherapist will also give you the tools you need to look after yourself.

Myotherapists aren’t in the business of repeat customers.
Delivering Top Quality Care

Knowing which manual therapist is important, but whichever you pick, you are sure to get very good results.

Remedial massage therapists are mostly utilised by athletes. Their massage techniques help tone muscles, enhance performance, speed up recovery and prevent injuries.

Remedial massage is also good for providing relief from chronic pain, postural related pain and for stress management.

The benefits of remedial massage also help to:

- Relax muscle
- Encourage relaxation
- Improve sleep
- Enhance sports performance
- Reduce recovery time & increase rate of healing
- Manage symptoms of PMS
- Increase range of motion in people living with osteoarthritis
- Facilitate lymphatic drainage

When suffering from general or chronic aches and pains, the services of a myotherapists are usually sought. However, they are helpful in the treatment of many other conditions including:

- Neck pain
- Back pain
- Headaches/Migraines
- Sciatica
- Chronic Overuse (RSI)
- Tennis/Golfers elbow
- Joint pain
- Numbness and tingling
- General tightness
- Carpal Tunnel
- Knee, hip & ankle pain
- Frozen shoulder
- Elbow & wrist pain
Follow through with The Treatment

Both of these professionals will recommend activities to help with your healing. Myotherapists will also recommend activities to improve your lifestyle.

In order to minimise visits, patients are always advised to follow through with the recommended plan of action. In instances when the same activities are repeated after treatment, the problem could resurface.

The preventative methods of Myotherapy are only effective if they are adhered to.

If you have a bone, blood or muscle disease, you will need to speak to your doctor first before requesting the services of either of these.

Again, the advantage of visiting a myotherapists is that if for any reason you are not responding to treatment, you can be put on a new plan.

If you just want to relax, are feeling stressed or have a mild pain, then a remedial massage therapist would be your best bet.

It is important to know exactly what you are being treated for, what the treatment entails and the expected recovery process.

Whatever pain you might be experiencing, you are only one step away from recovery. Whatever you choose, we’re ready for you.