

Science

By Mike Falcon

**P**rofessional football players, bodybuilders, and the general public alike are enjoying the benefits of a unique and patented soft tissue rehabilitation system called the Active Release Technique. From Denver Broncos linebacker Bill Romanowski to actor Danny Glover, ART has helped.

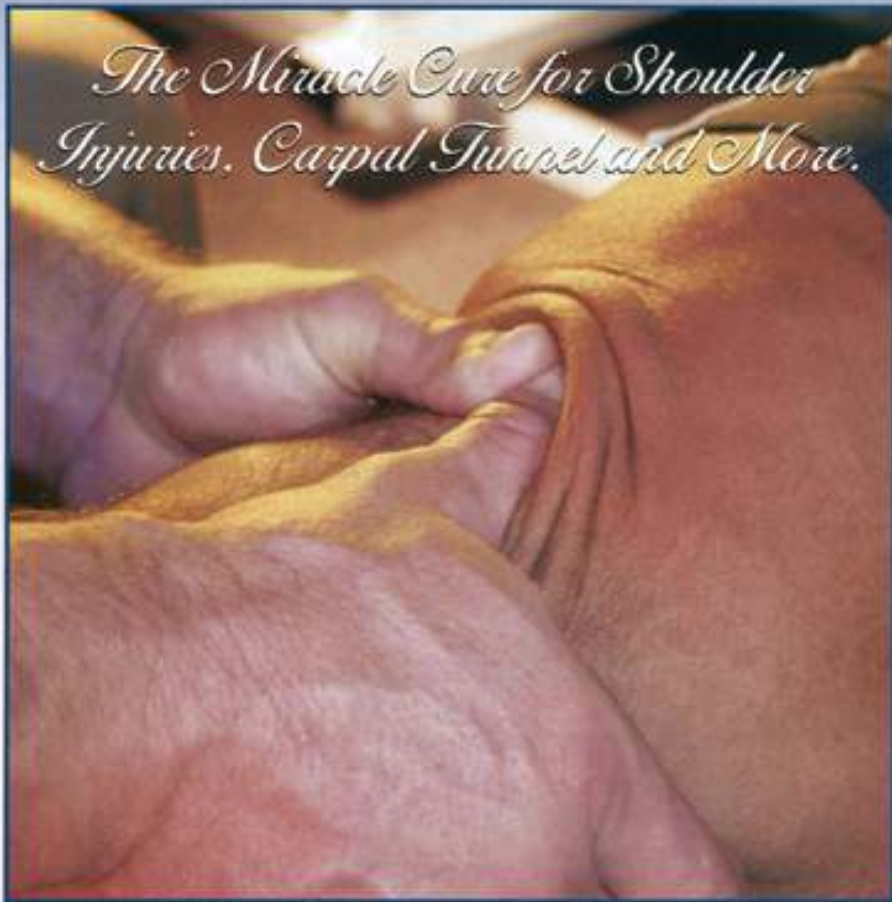
Its success rests on the insights about scar tissue, micro-adhesions, and muscular and soft tissue stresses developed by Dr. Michael Leahy, a Colorado



# Avoiding Surgery with ART

## Active Release Technique

*The Miracle Cure for Shoulder Injuries, Carpal Tunnel and More.*



*Scar tissue and adhesions limit oxygen transport into healthy tissue. This delays tissue repair for bodybuilders and athletes, decreases flexibility and predisposes the area to further damage.*

Springs chiropractor who now brings ART into the Denver Broncos training facility. "Everyone was claiming to break up harmful scar tissue," says Leahy, "but that seldom actually occurred."

Scar tissue, says Leahy, limits the transportation of oxygen into healthy tissue. This delays tissue

repair for bodybuilders and weight-training athletes, can decrease flexibility, and predisposes the area to further damage.

"It's a sort of negative feedback loop," explains Leahy. "That's particularly true for people who rely on weight-training. The scar tissue makes the mus-

cle tight and limits the oxygen needed for repair, and then the tissue reinjures because it can't receive oxygen well and the cycle continues. It's a self-perpetuating process."

These adhesions can occur as a result of acute injury, repetitive motion, constant pressure, or continuing tension -- all too familiar to those who spend hours training. Examples of these conditions collectively called cumulative trauma disorders include carpal tunnel syndrome, rotator cuff syndrome, chronic lower-back pain, and whiplash.

While ART came about through working with athletes, the number of people with "everyday" injuries who got relief through ART is legion.

This includes many who were considering surgery, especially for carpal tunnel syndrome. ART has also been very successful in treating people with thoracic outlet syndrome, an aggravating and painful condition that is often treated by removing a rib.

Many of the standard modalities used to break up scar tissue

and the adhesions that develop between layers of working muscle feel good, but have apparently little long-term benefit. "Massage feels good because it



*Between just 2 to 4 sessions, ART can correct a longstanding chronic condition such as rotator cuff syndrome or chronic lower back pain.*

does loosen up the muscle," notes Leahy, "but it doesn't break the cycle."

Leahy was similarly frustrated by the limits of chiropractic techniques -- a strange observation when you remember he's a classically trained chiropractor. Chiropractic does work, emphasizes Leahy, but ART completes the science.

"What I noticed in examining a number of systems was that there were tons of very convincing anecdotal evidence regarding certain protocols, but very little science and research behind it," says Leahy. "The 'big' science has gone into things like radiology, as an example. What we had to do was piece together the puzzle."

Leahy's first observations centered on body-builders. "Bodybuilders are a great subject group," observes Leahy. "They know their bodies well -- they notice even the most minute changes. General populations tend to be a little more removed from a total sense of their bodies because they aren't paying a lot of attention to subtle feedback."

"What we noticed is that the affected soft tissue had a textural change. It turns out it was scar tissue formation that you could actually feel. And that was the key -- a change in texture alone doesn't mean a whole lot by itself, but when that's tied in some way to a decrease in measured performance we have a major clue. It impeded function."

In addition to limited ranges of motion, pain in movement, and other familiar problems, Leahy found a critical piece of feedback from bodybuilders. "They just weren't getting good pumps. The reason behind that was that the muscle wasn't contracting efficiently and couldn't pump up well because of the same underlying problem -- they weren't getting the oxygen necessary to repair. And if they can't repair well they can't grow well either. The muscle simply poops out because it's not getting what it needs."

Figuring out why other systems were still not effecting long-term therapeutic change was the remaining issue. "Of course if you do the same movements incorrectly over and over that will happen," says Leahy. "But aside from that we knew something was missing."

What Leahy found now seems obvious -- but it was fairly revolutionary before 1991, when he first began teaching his



*Active Release Technique has been a miracle cure for bodybuilding legend, Boyer Coe who swears by Dr. Leahy's methods.*



*Dr. Leahy has worked on many professional bodybuilders such as Milos Sarcevic who claim "they just can't get good pumps." Due to ART, these well-known athletes have been able to continue in their careers.*

innovative technique using the name myofascial release. Since the injuries, trauma, and subsequent micro scarring occurred during movement Leahy reasoned that corrective therapies might involve movement as well.

Four years later, after researching, cataloging, and refining these detailed protocols, he trademarked the name Active Release Techniques®. Difficult to describe in print, these active techniques involve precisely manipulating soft tissue, often as the patient moves

an arm or leg. This interactive process is far different from the generally static techniques performed on someone because the patient may be called upon to move in a certain direction as the Active Release practitioner pulls or pushes the soft tissue in either a complimentary or contrasting manner.

It is often not a particularly pleasant experience. "If someone thinks they're coming in for a massage-like session it takes some mental readjustment," says Leahy.

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