

Elastic Kinesiology Taping for Horses

Equi-Tape®: Athletic and Therapeutic Taping

Ilene Nessenson, JD

Genesis of Elastic Athletic and Therapeutic Kinesiology Taping For Horses

Elastic kinesiology tape has been successfully used on humans for over 25 years in athletic training and competition situations as well as in injury rehabilitation situations. It gained significant popularity during the 2012 Summer Olympics when many athletes were seen with “strange colored tape” in widely varying patterns covering many different muscles. It has since “gone mainstream” and is used by many human chiropractors, physical therapists, doctors, massage therapists, trainers and other health care providers around the world.

As stated by Dr. Beverley Gordon, the founder of Equi-Tape®, “When something is found to work well on humans, it is only a matter of time before its use crosses over to the equestrian community. Chiropractic, acupuncture, physical therapies, massage and holistic medicine are just a few examples from a long list of health care modalities to cross over. Now, we can add elastic kinesiology taping to that list as well.” And, just like for humans, elastic kinesiology tape can be used on horses in both working athletic and injury rehabilitation situations. The type of adhesive and type of taping techniques and patterns have been modified for use on horses (and other animals too), but the benefits are the same.

How Does Equi-Tape® Elastic Kinesiology Tape For Horses Work?

How is it Different from Other Tape or Wraps? Elastic kinesiology tape is very different from standing and fleece wraps, vet wrap tape and other non-elastic tape in several fundamental ways.

First, elastic kinesiology tape interacts with the skin and lifts it. The lifting effect forms very small convolutions (wrinkles) in the skin thus increasing the interstitial space and decompressing the tissue. This enables increased blood flow and oxygenation, facilitation of lymph drainage and a decrease in inflammation (if present.) The lifting of the skin and interaction with associated neuro and sensory receptors by the tape also reduces pain by decreasing pressure on pain receptors and impacting how pain receptors respond to messages from the brain. This improves

the body’s ability to heal in injury rehabilitation situations and enables faster recovery in training and competition situations. Standing wraps and other types of tape do not interact with the skin in this manner. They act in the opposite way and compress the tissue.

Second, the tape stretches and is flexible. It does not restrict range of motion. It provides stability and support and can improve functional movement. Therefore, it can be used while riding, in turn out and can be a great asset during most phases of rehabilitation.

Third, the tape helps prolong the benefits of manual therapies because it helps increase the stretch of the collagen fibers in the muscles.

How Is Elastic Kinesiology Tape Applied? What Are All The Different Taping Patterns?

Specialized knowledge is needed to properly apply the tape and obtain all the benefits it offers. Determination of the taping goal, knowing what taping pattern to apply, how much stretch to use, and the direction in which to apply the tape is paramount to success. The great news is that the proper taping technique and pattern for a given situation can be taught to riders, owners and trainers by a certified taping practitioner so they can subsequently apply the tape themselves if needed.

In order to properly apply the tape, there must be an accurate assessment of the horse’s needs and issues. It is also important to understand if the horse is in full or partial work or in rehabilitation. This critical information is then used to determine the taping goal, technique, pattern and location.

Taping goals can include relaxation of overworked muscles, assisting and supporting muscle function to minimize fatigue, increasing blood flow and lymph drainage to reduce swelling and edema and release of the fascia. Taping techniques involve determining the correct amount of stretch to use, the direction in which to apply the tape (muscle origin to insertion or insertion to origin), use of taping anchors, and use of extra spray adhesive and location(s) to apply the tape to name a few.



Sacroiliac Support & Relaxation Taping



Suspensory Taping

There are many taping patterns, and often patterns are combined to address complex situations. Here are some examples of taping patterns used to address some common conditions.

What Are Some Common Situations In Which Elastic Kinesiology Tape Is Used?

Common application situations include:

- Providing support and stability to the horse’s joints for suspensory and tendon injuries during the non-riding and riding phases of recovery and rehabilitation;
- Helping address chronic conditions such as kissing spine and lesions;
- Providing relief for neck, shoulder and back pain and stiffness from overuse, weakness, chronic stiffness or ill-fitting saddles (You have to address the saddle issue as well.);
- Preventative application for horse’s that have a high workload or are prone to certain injuries due to conformation, riding discipline or other health or musculoskeletal issues;
- Helping to maintain full range of motion and reduction of the incidence of movement restrictions reoccurring following manual therapy (massage, chiropractic, acupuncture) for SI (sacroiliac)/sacrum, neck, knee or other joints and muscles; and
- Helping to speed the healing of hematomas and areas of bruising and swelling

Circulation Taping for Hematoma





Shoulder Muscle Assist Taping

Results: Does The Tape Really Work?

Yes, the tape really works! Being a (recovering) attorney, I have a healthy skepticism when I investigate additional healthcare methods to help horses and riders. The benefits obtained by taping have far exceeded my expectations. My clients have also been amazed by the results.

“I was really impressed with the elastic kinesiology taping Ilene used on Mounted Police horse Monty. He took a spill while out on patrol and strained his lumbosacral area. Combined with bodywork, the tape immediately helped the area relax and feel like normal tissue again. I was very happy with the results. In addition, I was frankly surprised the tape stayed on for the full four days even with a big draft cross rolling and moving around.” Jennifer Mack, Trainer and Riding Instructor, Portland Mounted Patrol Unit



Relaxation Back Taping on Portland Mounted Police Horse Monty



Gluteal Muscle Assist Taping

“A few weeks before my first competition of the year, my horse injured her right hindquarter and a hematoma started forming rapidly. Ilene came right out and helped my horse by performing bodywork and applying elastic kinesiology tape over the inflamed area. Almost immediately, my horse demonstrated signs of relief and relaxation. Three days later, the hematoma was nearly gone with no heat or signs of pain! My horse is now going back to work.” Jessica S., Dressage Rider

And, in case you are wondering, I have taped my horse and myself and had great results!

Final Thoughts...

While taping can be complicated and requires specialized knowledge, it is a very useful, non-invasive equine healthcare tool. Specific taping applications can be taught to riders and trainers by certified practitioners. While there is much that has already been learned about taping from the research and application of tape to humans and horses, more research is constantly being pursued to fully understand the benefits, applications and limitations of equine kinesiology taping.

Author

Ilene Nessenson, JD, is the owner of Holistic Horse Bodyworks, LLC. She is a Certified Equi-Tape® Practitioner, a Certified Equine Bodyworker and English and Western Saddle Fitter and English Saddle Reflocker. She is also a Thermal Imaging Technician and Certified Yoga Instructor.

*For more information visit
www.HolisticHorseBodyworks.com*