



**Level 2 Award in Applying Myofascial
Cupping (RQF)
601/0046/1
MANUAL**



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The History of Myofascial Cupping

In recent times myofascial cupping has grown in both popularity and celebrity. In fact, often athletes and sports persons can be seen to have strange like octopus marks upon their bodies when competing.

Cupping itself has been around for centuries and was practiced by a number of cultures throughout the ages. One of the earliest types of treatment on record. Originating in the eastern china. The techniques and indeed the cups may have changed, however the effects have remained the same through-out time. In fact, cupping was widely used right up until the 19th century as a popular treatment, however as drugs and medicines where developed the technique quickly begun to fall out of favour.

By the early 20th century the treatment had falling out of favour, with many medical professionals labelling it as not effective.

As a soft tissue therapy Myofasical dry cupping enables therapists to pull up blood, underlying tissues and fluids close to the surface of the skin. By creating a 'suction' the discipline pulls up tissue and materials creating a negative pressure, 'suction'. The technique employs the use of plastic or glass cups.

By 'sucking' blood flow to the area, it stimulates the healing process. An effective technique that stretches tight fascia and skeletal muscle within the targeted area. The cupping technique increases blood circulation and helps deliver both oxygen and nutrients to the targeted area where the cups are placed, thus engaging your bodies natural healing process.

A very popular technique with many differing variations, which can be found in many different countries and cultures.

Cupping can also be used alongside acupuncture and dry needling. Dry cupping can be used directly over acupuncture points or along acupuncture channels.

Today we will use dry cupping as an alternative tool and directly place the cups over trigger points.

The Theory Behind the Technique.

As the human body ages we begin to degenerate. As we reach our 40s this is accelerated. The breakdown of muscle, blood flow, increase in the recovery period and an increase in muscle adhesions as well as a regression in physical activity can be troublesome.

Through inactivity the blood supply to tissues decreases and the fascia gets knotted and scarred, which limits movement. This can then become a vicious cycle. The use of dry cupping can aid these effects by increasing blood supply to the muscle, fascia and skin and increasing pliability of soft tissue.

Dry cupping will pull blood into the specific area. The tissue then will become saturated with new blood whilst the vacuum created will pull stagnant blood out of the targeted area (tissue). This is evidenced by the hicky like appearance that is typical left behind (almost bruise like). It is rarely a painful mark.

As new blood is forced into the tissue around the cup the body begins to be stimulating into producing new blood vessels which is named neovascularisation. As they form they will have the capability to feed the tissues with nutrient and oxygen.

Sterile inflammation is also produced by the process of dry cupping. This is where the body releases white blood cells, platelets, fibroblasts and other chemicals to promote the healing process. When the vacuum occurs, it causes separation of the different layers of tissue which can cause micro trauma and tearing. The microtrauma is registered by the body and sterile inflammation is initiated in.

Fascia and tissue can be stretched several feet with cupping. The stretch action produces a stretch reflex which helps to reduce muscle tension along with micro trauma, which stimulates the formation of new blood vessels and the migration of the blood nutrients to the damaged tissue. When 10 or so cups are used around an injured area it can produce a stretch reflex within the connective tissue and fascia which results in increased pliability and the range of movement.

Key Benefits Include:

The benefits of the technique are vast.

- Increased removal of oedema after injury.
- Increases in the removal of chemical irritants within muscle and fascia and the removal of stagnant blood.
- Increases in circulation to the muscle, fascia and skin, which increases oxygenation and nutrient levels within the soft tissue.
- Causing micro-trauma which leads to sterile inflammation and a renewed healing process.
- Produces a stretch reflex in fascia and connective tissue, which increases mobility and pliability.
- Cupping techniques that include active movement stimulate the nervous system and aid in re-educating muscle memory and proprioception.
- Aids in the management of pain, as cupping therapy reduces muscular tension, nerve compression and irritation through the build-up of chemical irritants, whilst increasing range of movement.
- Helps those who are older suffering from degeneration.

Types of Cups:

There are several different variations; plastic, rubber, rounded glass or bamboo. Creating a vacuum can be done in several ways such as using a flame (fire cupping), suction pump with a release valve or a suction bulb attached to the top.



Considerations:

Before applying the treatment, there a number of things that need to be considered by the therapists before commencing.

- The age of the client, as they can have more fragile skin.
- Size of the area to be treated
- Size of cups in relation to area being treated, smaller cups are more intense.
- Duration of cupping, the longer the cups are left on the more the reducing the effect.
- The more cups used the higher the intensity, likewise if placed closed together.
- Suction of the cups, the more pumps the greater the intensity.
- Marks can last for 5-20 days, the quicker they disappear the better blood supply to the area.

Contraindications:

As with all types of massage therapy they are the same, in addition to this:

- DO NOT use cups over cuts, any broken skin, blisters, acne or swelling. (Consideration should be made for someone who may have shaved or been waxed prior to this treatment.)
- Dry needling should only be done after dry cupping and not prior.
- Recent surgery, seen as a local type of contraindications
- Avoid enlarged veins, blood veins as well as thromboses.
- Avoid any work on abdomen and lower back if a client is pregnant.
- It is contraindication for anyone who is receiving or undergone surgery or treatment for lymphatic cancer.
- Do not apply on bony ridges, head or throat.
- Someone taking anticoagulants. (Which prevents blood clots.)
- People with diabetes will be more sensitive.

Vacuum:

For the cupping to be successful a vacuum need to be created, thus creating suction upon the skin. When using the suction cup procedure, oxygen is sucked out of the cup with a handheld pump.

The Cupping Procedure:

Prior to starting the treatment and application of the cups, we need to ensure:

- Apply any medium onto the skin if being used.
- Area is clear of clothing, hair and any obstacles.
(More medium required if the client is hairy.)
- Client is in the correct position and relaxed.

Cupping:

- Ensure client is not feeling dizzy, faint or any adverse reactions to applications
- Inform client not to move or make any un-necessary movements, or the cups may come loose. There should be pull on the skin but not painful.

Removal of Cups:

- At the top of the suction cup release the pressure.
- Effleurage the area after and use the dry cupping glide technique over the top of the area treated to help reduce any marks.

*Ensure at the conclusion of the treatment that cups are washed and sterilised in-between clients. This can be done by placing the cups into warm soapy water, wiping them thoroughly and then rinsing and either leaving to dry or towel drying them. Some cups can be placed in the dishwasher but be mindful to place them in on their own and clean the machine after. It is vital to ensure high ethical standards.

Consent:

As within the majority of therapies, its good practice and professional to gain informed consent. When using dry cupping therapy as a standalone treatment it is essential to gain signed consent in the same way that you would with any treatment.

When using dry cupping therapy within a combination treatment, along with for example sports massage therapy. It is vital that a second consent form is added to ensure the client is fully aware of both specific treatments and they are clearly defined and the client is fully aware and understands each treatments processes, effects and possible side effects.

Any aspect to consider is examples of the differing effects and discolouration that can occur as result of the cupping. This is to ensure the client is not shocked or startled after their first treatment.

Images and photos can be added to your form, so to add that visual representation amongst their permission and signature. Also outlining that marks can last for up to 5 – 20 days.

Declaration of Consent

I _____ (Name of client/Print) do declare that ____ (NAME OF THERAPIST) AS MY THERAPIST has fully explained the cupping therapy procedure, effects both benefits and possible side effects of the dry cupping therapy.

Being made aware that cupping marks can last between 5 – 20 days and I _____ (NAME OF CLIENT) _____ consent to the treatment.

Signed: _____ (Clients Signature.).

Signed: _____ (Therapists Signature.).

Date:

Cupping Techniques:

Static	Static vacuum is created and the cup is left in place.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak cupping: older clients or children under 7 (5 Mins duration & maximum 2 cups.). • Medium strength cupping: children 7-14yr, older clients or delicate skin. (5 Mins & maximum 5 cups.). • Strong cupping: adults on the back, shoulders and knee areas. (20 mins maximum & 10 cups maximum.). 	
Walking / flash	Multiple cups are placed along the muscle. Then the first cup is removed and placed and reapplied back in front of the last cup, providing continuous movement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be lighter and more superficial depending on the suction used • Can produce less cupping marks and other techniques 	
Slide	Oli or massage medium must be used with this technique. Oil or medium is applied and then cup placed in position with a light to medium suction. Cup is then slid over the area to be treated.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for pain over a larger area: Note that this technique can be painful at first for the client. • Can be done with ether weak, medium or strong suction. • Can be combined with active movement technique. 	
Soft Tissue Release	Muscle is placed into a shortened and relaxed position, whilst one or multiple cups are applied. The joint is then moved actively or passively into stretch position. Joint is flexed and extended 3 – 5 times or until a relaxation response is felt and ROM is increased.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can produce a quicker stretch response and restore ROM • When performed actively, it can help the client to feel in control of the treatment. • Aid proprioception and nerve stimulation via movement 	
Active Movement	Sliding technique is used whilst the client flexes and extend the associated joint. The joint movement can be done actively or passively by the therapist.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can help to produce a quicker stretch response in the soft tissue • Helps to increase heat within the muscle through the joint movement and helps to increase localised blood flow to the working muscle. • Aid proprioception and nerve stimulation via movement. 	
Movement	Static dry cupping can also be used within stretching modalities, such as lateral and forward flexion of the spine. Cat /Cow stretches and child pose type stretches.

Colour of Cupping Marks:

The technique of cupping draws blood to all the external capillaries and as a result of this minor bruising can occur. With circular marks visible after the treatment. Lasting up to 20 days. Depending on both the client's reaction and strength of treatment. As the stagnated blood clears the client may feel the effects of the treatment even more. As the body gets used to the treatment over time the recovery will become quicker.

If blisters or blood spots occur after treatment then this is an indication that the treatment was too strong. Colours that are brought up after treatments are excellent indicators.

Colour:	Indication:
Light Red / Orange	Qi stagnation & possibly blood deficiency
Brown	Chronic Qi Stagnation
Mid Red through to Dark Purple	Blood Stagnation
Blue	Cold
White	Cold & Low Blood Flow

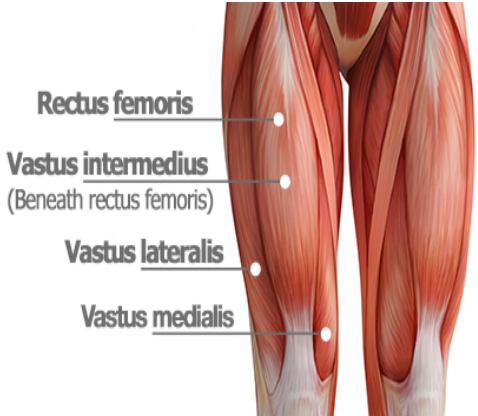

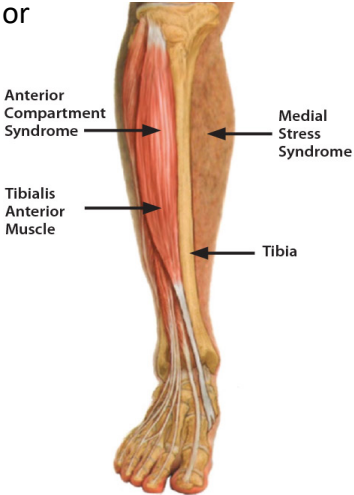
What does stagnation mean? Well marks that are deep purple/ blue or blackish in appearance can indicate blood stagnation within the specific area. This means that an injury or illness has resided in the area for a long time and the body has yet to full clear the stagnation. Cupping stimulates the body and its natural responses to deal with the stagnation more effectively.

Post Treatment:

After most treatments its best to advise clients to avoid the following for 12 hours.

- Caffeine, alcohol, sugary foods and drinks, dairy, and processed meats. These foods slow down your body's ability to absorb the treatment. There-fore reducing effectiveness.
- Hot showers, saunas, hot tubs and strong air conditioning.
- Intense exercise / work-outs.
- Strong cold and windy conditions.

Areas to be treated within this day course include:

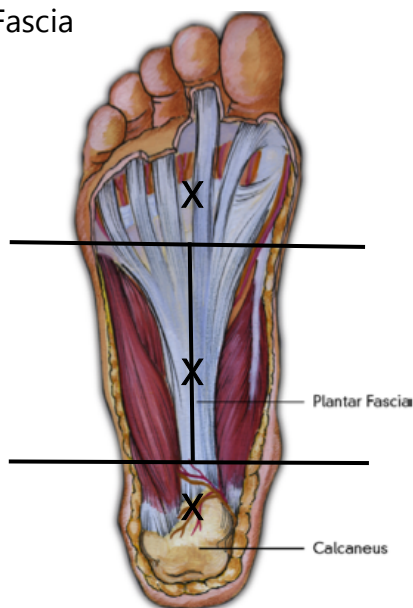
Area:	Notes:
<p>Quadriceps</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use base medium and effleurage to warm up the area. - Apply the cups along each muscle statically to begin and then work through your different techniques. - Move the leg to one side of the bed when carrying out soft tissue release and active movement. - Apply the cups when the quadricep is in a shortened contracted position. - Take the quadricep into flexion and then extension at the knee.
<p>Swollen Knee</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use base medium to apply lightly around the area. - Apply the cups around the swollen area but not on the swollen part. *Consider the size of your cups. - Apply the cups to the following areas creating a circle: rectus femoris, vastus medialis, sartorius, pes anserinus, patellar tendon and vastus lateralis. <p>*This is good for someone post-surgery.</p>
<p>Tibialis Anterior</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use base medium and effleurage to warm up the area. - Apply the cups along each muscle statically to begin and then work through your different techniques. *Consider the size of your cups and the area you are treating. - When carrying out soft tissue release and active movement, apply the cups when the tibialis anterior is in a shortened contracted position. - Then get the client to plantar flex and dorsi flex at the ankle, you can also get the client to evert and invert at the ankle.

Hamstrings, Gastrocnemius and Soleus



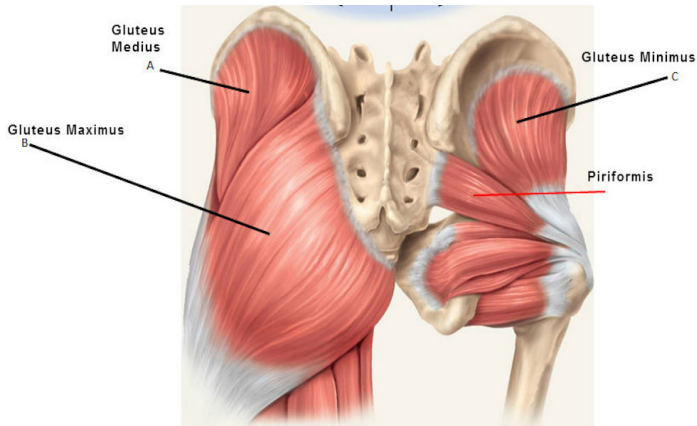
- Use base medium and effleurage to warm up the area.
 - Apply the cups along each muscle statically to begin and then work through your different techniques.
 - Move the leg to a flexed position when carrying out soft tissue release and active movement.
 - Apply the cups when the hamstring is in a shortened contracted position.
 - Take the hamstring into extension and then flexion at the knee.
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- Use base medium and effleurage to warm up the area.
 - Apply the cups along each muscle statically to begin and then work through your different techniques.
 - Move the gastrocnemius into a flexed position when carrying out soft tissue release and active movement.
 - Apply the cups when the gastrocnemius is in a shortened contracted position.
 - Then get the client to dorsi flex and plantar flex.

Plantar Fascia



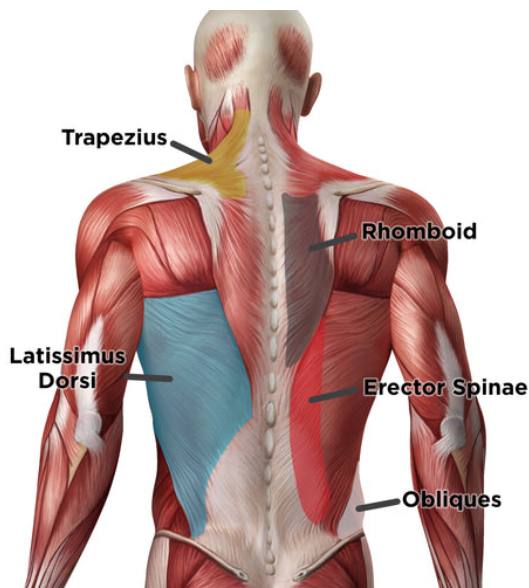
- Use base medium and effleurage to warm up the area.
 - Apply the cups statically to the areas indicated "X" on the image; calcaneus, plantar fascia and the balls of the feet.
 - Stretch out the foot whilst the cups are on static by extending and flexing at the metacarpal joints. *Consider the size of the cups you are using.
 - Then effleurage and try the gliding and friction techniques over the different areas of the foot. First working on the calcaneus, then the medial area, lateral and finally balls of the feet.
- *Good for strain in the soleus, gastrocnemius and issues within the achilles.

Glute Region



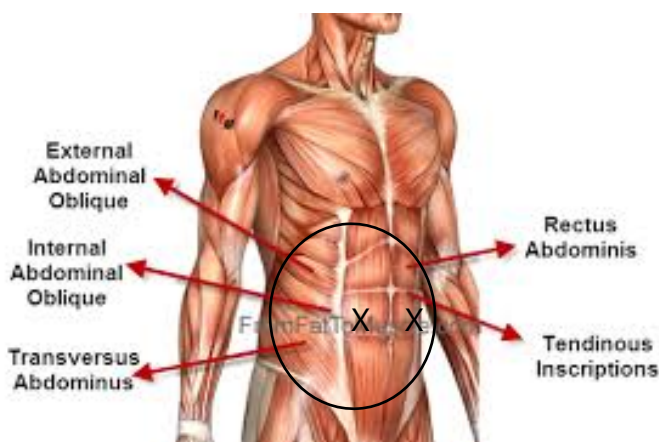
- This area can be treated in a pronated position or side lying. When side lying you can also apply static cups to the greater trochanter, PSIS, TFL, IT band, quadriceps and hamstrings.
- Use base medium and effleurage to warm up the area.
- Apply the cups to the muscle area statically to begin and then work through your different techniques.
- When side lying you can also apply static cups to the greater trochanter, PSIS, TFL, IT band, quadriceps and hamstrings.
- To achieve soft tissue release in a side lying position apply the cups statically to all the areas indicated above, flex the knee and leg at the hip and then take it into extension in both areas after.

Back



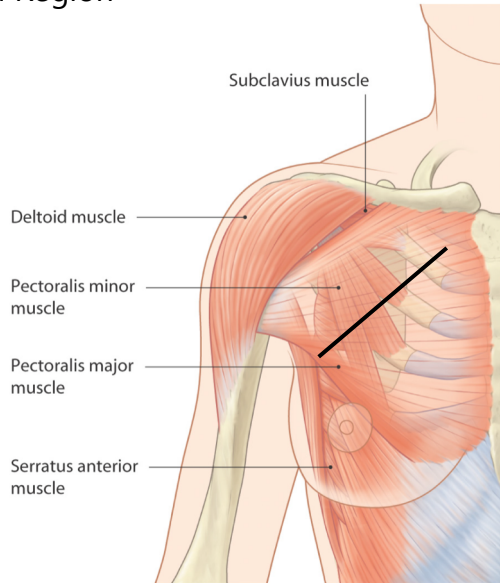
- Use base medium and effleurage to warm up the area.
 - You can apply the cups along the spinous processes, starting with one on the sacroiliac joint. *This will help reduce tension and is good for those suffering with prolapsed or herniated discs. BUT get GP referral before treating.
 - or separate the back into upper and lower when applying statically to begin and then work through your different techniques.
 - When carrying out soft tissue release and active movement on the latissimus dorsi, have the muscle in a shortened position when applying the cups statically.
 - Take the arm out to the side and up to the ear into extension and then flexion at the shoulder joint.
- *Going over the ribs is good for relieving stress or helping those with asthma to help with deeper breathing.

Abdomen



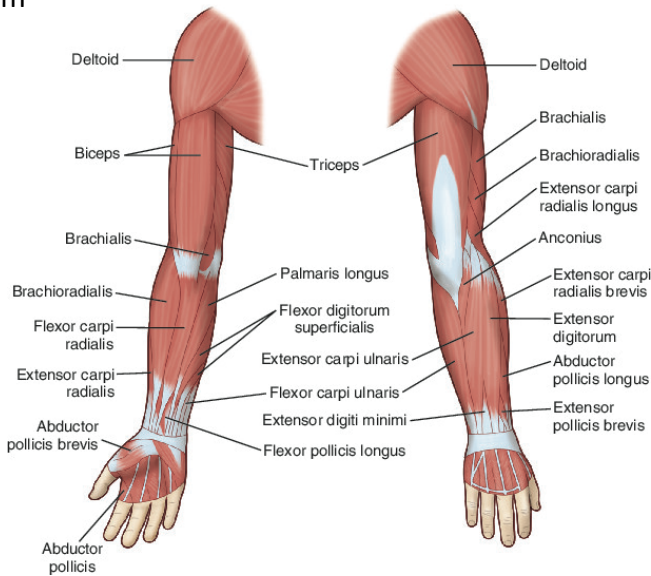
- Use base medium and effleurage to warm up the area, massaging in a clockwise circular motion around the abdomen area.
 - Apply the cups statically around all the muscles in a large circle as indicated on the image targeting the transversus abdominus, obliques, lower ribcage to target the intercostal muscles, diaphragm and then the two trigger points marked with an "X" either side of the belly button on the rectus abdominus.
 - Then get the client to take five deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth, whilst the cups are on statically for a soft tissue release.
 - Then effleurage the area once the cups are off and then you can use your other cupping techniques, for example gliding. Again, in a clock wise position, work over the transversus abdominus, obliques, lower ribcage to target the intercostal muscles, diaphragm and rectus abdominus all the way round.
- *This helps lower back pain when this area is treated and good for anxiety or stress sufferers.

Pectoral Region



- Use base medium and effleurage to warm up the area.
- You can apply the cups statically along the black line indicated on the image to target the pectoral muscles to begin and then work through your different techniques.
- When carrying out soft tissue release and active movement on the pectoral region, bring the arm up into horizontal flexion and apply the cups statically whilst the pectoralis is shortened. Then bring the arm into horizontal extension and flexion using the shoulder joint.

Arm



- Use base medium and effleurage to warm up the area.
- You can apply the cups statically on the belly of the bicep, triceps, deltoid anterior, medial and posterior.
*Consider the size of cups you will use on this area.
- When carrying out soft tissue release and active movement on the bicep or triceps, have the muscle in a shortened position when applying the cups statically.
- Bend the arm at the elbow joint into extension and then flexion or flexion extension.
- You can do the same as above on the lower limb of the arm. For soft tissue release and active movement of the flexors, as above apply the cups whilst the area being treated is in a shortened position.



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