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What are you trying to do for fitness?

Compression Garments - Are They Really Worth It?

Effect on Exercise Performance & Recovery

Compression garments are all over the market and sold at almost every sporting goods store, but are they really worth it? Do compression garments increase performance? Do compression garments speed up recovery?

Advertisers would like to make you believe that compression garments are the best thing ever invented and needed by everyone – although this may not be completely true. A study by Kraemer, et. all. in 1996 looked at the influence on vertical jump performance in NCAA Division I volleyball player. While a good amount of research has investigated non-athletic populations, this was one of the first studies to look at the athletic population. In the study they did not find an increased power or force of the highest jump, but there was a significantly higher mean power and force production over 10 consecutive jumps when wearing the compression garment. So the garment was determined to have a positive effect on repeat performance, but no effect on a single bout of performance.

After a workout is completed, it is known that the body cannot produce the same results without recovery – but can compression garments decrease recovery time. A recent study looked at this very issue and found conflicting evidence for the necessity for compression garments in recovery for elite athletes. It was found however that compression garments might be of benefit to younger athletes who are being introduced to plyometric training, or experiencing a significant increase in training intensity and volume. While debatable on actual necessity, another issue is comfort levels in wearing these garments continuously for recovery.

When weighing in on compression garments for a single bout, while no evidence that they hurt, there is also no evidence they help. But when looking at doing repeated bouts of an exercise or movement, compression garments may be of assistance for some.

Davies, V, Thompson, KG, and Cooper, SM. The effect of compression garments on recovery. *J Strength Cond Res* 23(6): 1786-1794, 2009

Kraemer, WJ, Bush, JA, Bauer, NT, Triplett-McBride, NT, Paxton, NJ, et. all. Influence of Compression Garments on Vertical Jump Performance in NCAA Division I volleyball players. *J Strength Cond Res* 10(3):180-183. 1996.