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Athletic Gear 101: How does compression clothing work?

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You may have seen the tight shirts or pants many professional athletes wear today. Is this just another fashion craze or is there really science behind it all?

The beginning of compression clothing started in rehabilitation. Think about the basic ACE bandage. When you twist your ankle, an athletic trainer wraps your ankle in order to support the weakened muscles. So if compression is used for recovery of injured ankles, what about muscle repair of a healthy athlete?



Daniel Batman, Australian sprinter wearing [Skins](#) (source)

[Under Armour](#) claims to have started the compression craze. The benefits of using compression wear for recovery has shown to promote muscle repair, reduce swelling and decrease delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS). Many athletes swear by these, including [Team Columbia](#) who uses Skins during the Tour de France.

There are also performance enhancing capabilities to compression wear. It will not make you jump higher but instead will delay muscle fatigue which would allow you to jump at a maximum height for a longer period of time. When worn, they reduce the muscle vibration. It's really the opposite to a [Power Plate](#) machine. Stand on a vibration plate and muscles will fatigue faster, but wear compression clothing during sports and reduce the amount of muscle fatigue. Also, the compression clothing will assist in muscle alignment which will help in longevity of muscle power.

Compression clothing is specific for various sports. For example, a power lifter who preforms 1RM will wear an extremely tight 'super suit' which can only be tolerated for a few minutes. On the flip side, there are athletes in football, soccer, running and cycling that will wear a looser compression style designed for long term wear.

In summary, compression clothing is going to be around for a long time. It helps not only in longevity of performance but also in aiding recovery. Have you tried compression clothing and seen improvement? Share your comments below.