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# Sore After Working Out? NBA Players Swear by Inflatable Boots Like These

Hoops stars like LeBron James rely on the rejuvenating, massaging powers of compression boots. Our writer put one pair to the test.



BOOT UP Therabody's new RecoveryAir JetBoots use pneumatic compression to help you recover. \$900, Therabody.com

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Apr. 21, 2022 8:45 am ET

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Yet, medical-grade inflatable compression boots, basically massive personal massagers for your legs, have been used by NBA athletes like LeBron James since 2011. And mainstream consumer versions from startups like Hyperice and Rapid Reboot have become widely available. You might even encounter a pair at your local gym or physical therapy office.

Intrigued, I spent a couple of weeks with the Therabody RecoveryAir JetBoots (\$900, [Therabody.com](https://therabody.com)) from the makers of the popular Theragun. After an intense virtual jaunt on Hawaii's Road to Hana astride my NordicTrack indoor bike, I took the boots to my couch and slid my feet inside. Prepped with a Levain cookie and some David Sedaris essays, I hit "play."

Compression boots work using a technique called pneumatic compression, said Dr. Karena Wu, owner of ActiveCare Physical Therapy, which has locations in Manhattan and Mumbai. "The air-filled compartments inflate and deflate sequentially to help promote lymphatic circulation and movement of blood." During compression, blood is pumped back toward the heart, and when the compartments deflate, oxygen and nutrient-rich blood flow back out to the extremities.



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as personal as one's experience of pain, are subjective.

The rechargeable RecoveryAir JetBoots operate via pumps on each sole. Once you've turned them on, the boots inflate and deflate themselves. As I sat motionless, I felt like a tube of toothpaste, being gently kneaded empty by a frugal brusher. The sensation was just right, but at any point I could have used the panel on either boot to adjust the pressure in 25-unit increments to 100 mmHg. An upcoming Bluetooth app will let you custom-tailor your pressure settings further, by increments of 5 mmHG of pressure.

For most of the population, Dr. Donoghue said levels above 30 mmHg aren't recommended. But she concluded that the boots were unlikely to cause much harm. (Therabody pointed me to two small, independent, peer-reviewed studies that indicate pneumatic compression is safe at, respectively, pressures of up to 130 mmHg or 110 mmHg.)

The JetBoots' main drawback, and that of similar devices, is price. If you balk at an \$11 post-workout green juice, you might find dropping \$900 to flush out toxins unthinkable. Plus, the boots I tested ran loud. Distracted by their drone, I realized that I had been rereading the same Sedaris paragraph about how many more foxes there are in Normandy than in Raleigh, N.C. for minutes. But my results were encouraging. On my next run around the Central Park reservoir, it felt like there was liquid gold pulsing through my calves.

Dr. Donoghue said I could be experiencing a classic case of the placebo effect. The boots might make you feel like you're recovering quicker, but "you can get the same benefit from walking or light movement after your workout."

Point taken. But if I'm offered the choice between a post-run walk or zipping into soothing booties, I'll take the latter. And another cookie.

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