

Hands On Healthy Living

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Stretch Out

A few precautions can prevent future pain

Kelli Crosby

You brush your teeth daily because you don't want cavities or gum disease, right? Well, what do you do on a daily basis to prevent tension in your neck? Brushing your teeth offers you preventive dental care, but what if you could learn to be preventive with the rest of your body?

We all have bad daily habits we don't even notice until something starts to hurt. These bad habits are the root cause of many painful conditions. To help prevent pain, however, we can turn these bad habits into good habits that can be worked into our daily routine. Here is some general advice that can apply to almost every part of daily living.

Sit Up Straight.

Sit in a chair with your hands on your hips. Slouch. Feel how your hips roll back (if you're wearing jeans, you'll be sitting on your pockets). Now sit up straight by moving your pelvis forward and centering your weight over your pelvis and off your buttocks.

Sleep on Your Back or Side.

Sleeping on your stomach makes you twist your neck and body in order to breathe. This twisted position is terrible for your spine, especially for prolonged periods during sleep. Check your pillow and make sure it has a thickness that will support your neck in a position neutral to the rest of your spine. Try a

*The poetry of
the earth is
never dead.*

-John Keats



Even just a few minutes at work can help turn bad habits into good ones.

Don't Slouch.

Slouching puts strain on your neck and can give you a headache. Your head weighs roughly 10 pounds-about as much as a bowling ball. Your spine is designed to balance that bowling ball when you're in an upright posture. If you slouch, your muscles have to do more work to hold your head up, which makes your muscles tight and angry.

memory-foam contour pillow, especially if you are a side sleeper.

Bend with a Straight Spine.

Bending over with a curved back puts pressure on your disc material and strains the spine. The pressure created during incorrect bending can cause the

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discs to bulge and put pressure on spinal nerves. Your back was not made to lower and raise your body—that's what your buttocks, hips, and knees are for.

Stand with your knees shoulder-width apart and pretend you are going to lift a 50-pound box off the floor. If you are bending your knees and hips and using your legs to lower and raise your body weight, you are lifting correctly. Now, use the same technique to pick your shoes up off the floor. Think about a squatting movement when you need to lean forward, too—such as while washing your face in the sink. Let your hips and knees do the work.

Take Regular Stretch Breaks.

The muscles in your arms and hands get tight when you grip or pull. The muscles in your neck and shoulders get tight when you reach forward or away from your body. Give these muscles a break with a simple stretch.

It only takes 10 seconds to lengthen the tight tissue, which will take pressure off your joints and prevent chronic conditions like tendinitis and bursitis. Watch for opportunities to work in a brief stretch.

Undo Yourself.

Evaluate the position of your body during your daily activities and make sure you "undo" that position during the day. There is no way to teach a stretch for every single activity you do, but if you take the time to reverse the position of the joint and stretch in the opposite direction, you will lengthen tight tissue and reduce repetitive strain on joints.

Tips to Save Your Body

Replacing bad habits with good ones takes time and thought, but the effort is well worth it. Here are some helpful tips to keep you on track.

-- If you keep waking up on your stomach, wear a pair of gym shorts to bed and put a golf ball in each pocket. When you roll onto your stomach, the golf balls will wake you up and you can return to your back or side.

-- When unloading the dishwasher and getting laundry out of the machine, pose

like a tennis player waiting for a serve. The knees are over your toes (but not beyond the toes), buttocks are backward, and shoulders are forward.

-- Don't try to carve out 30 minutes daily for a stretching routine. If you stretch regularly throughout the day, you will be more effective at keeping tissue loose. Remember, it only takes 10 seconds to stretch a muscle—so find those seconds during your day and make the most of them.

-- Think about stretching the same way you think about hydration. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink water; by then you're already dehydrated. If you wait until something hurts before you stretch, you could develop chronic tension that can lead to everything from a headache to tendinitis.

A daily stretching routine will help

prevent future issues and address current ones. Don't wait until it's a problem. Start stretching today and, little by little, your body will thank you.

Kelli Crosby is the author of How to Think Like a Physical Therapist in Your Everyday Life. She graduated in 1999 from the University of North Florida and completed her specialty certification in orthopedic manipulative therapy in 2006.



Stretching for 10 seconds can take pressure off your joints and help relieve pain.

No Pain, No Gain?

Bodywork Doesn't Have to Hurt to be Effective

Cathy Ulrich

Some people believe massage must be painful to be effective. While some modalities may be intense, this doesn't necessarily translate to a knuckle-biting experience. In fact, painful bodywork can be counterproductive. If you can't breathe comfortably, want to tighten up, make a face, or curl your toes, the technique is too much for you. Your body will go into a protective mode and actually block any positive change.

"No pain, no gain" just doesn't have to apply when it comes to bodywork. Be sure to provide feedback to your practitioner so that you're on the same page. Think of it as a "scale of intensity." On my scale, zero is not touching you and ten is pain--not the worst pain you've ever felt but the place where you want to hold your breath, tighten up, make a face, leave your body. That's a ten.

You shouldn't ever have to be in a pain range to get results, and be sure to let your practitioner know if you're in an

eight or nine range. They may stay at that level if that's where the therapeutic value will be attained, but again, only if it's manageable and you're not tightening up.

And every single client is different. Not only do individuals all start in different places, but their bodies respond differently, and their pain thresholds are extremely varied. What one person finds heavenly, another calls torture.

If it does feel too painful, be sure to tell your therapist. Usually, a practitioner can simply slow down to ease the intensity without losing therapeutic value. Sometimes, if you are nervous or stressed, just remembering to breathe will make your body more open, and you'll remain comfortable.

Bodywork needn't be a test of how tough you are. By giving your therapist appropriate feedback and understanding that painful techniques aren't really helping your body heal, you'll have a

great experience in the session and feel better afterward.



Therapeutic massage actually feels good.

Be Immune to Inactivity

The World Health Organization has called inactivity the second-leading risk factor for non-communicable diseases and the fourth-leading risk factor for global mortality. In the United States, inactivity has helped contribute to the fact that 35.9 percent of adults age 20 years and over are obese, as well as 18 percent of adolescents and children ages 6-19.

With risk factors like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, coronary artery disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and more, it's important to make sure you get enough exercise and activity to stay healthy. Here are some tips to help you keep moving.

Do Something Aerobic Every Day

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends getting 2.5 hours of

moderate-intensity aerobic exercise each week. If you break it down, that's just over 20 minutes a day of activities like walking, water aerobics, riding a bike, or pushing a lawnmower. Want to cut that down even further? If you bump the exercise up to vigorous intensity, you can cut the time in half. Vigorous-intensity activities include jogging or running, swimming laps, and playing basketball or tennis.

Add Muscle-Strengthening Activities

Lifting weights, working with resistance bands, and doing body-weight resistance exercises, heavy yard work, or yoga are all considered by the CDC to be important muscle-strengthening activities. The recommendation is to get this type of exercise at least twice a week to the point where your muscles are

tired.

If you focus on setting realistic goals and getting just a bit of exercise each day, you'll be on your way to meeting the requirements in no time. Find exercises and activities that you enjoy doing, and it won't seem like such a burden. Plus, you'll feel great about reducing the risk factors associated with a sedentary lifestyle. So get a plan, get out there, and get moving!

*Peace begins
with a smile...*

-Mother Teresa

FALL PROMOTION

Purchase five one hour massages and receive 30 minutes added to your sixth massage at no charge. Make your last session a 90 minute for the price of an hour!

Massages can be given as gifts to friends and family. Gift Certificates are available in our office. Call or stop by for further information. All five massages must be purchased through November 30, 2013 to receive reward.

Duluth Chiropractic Clinic Massage Therapy

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