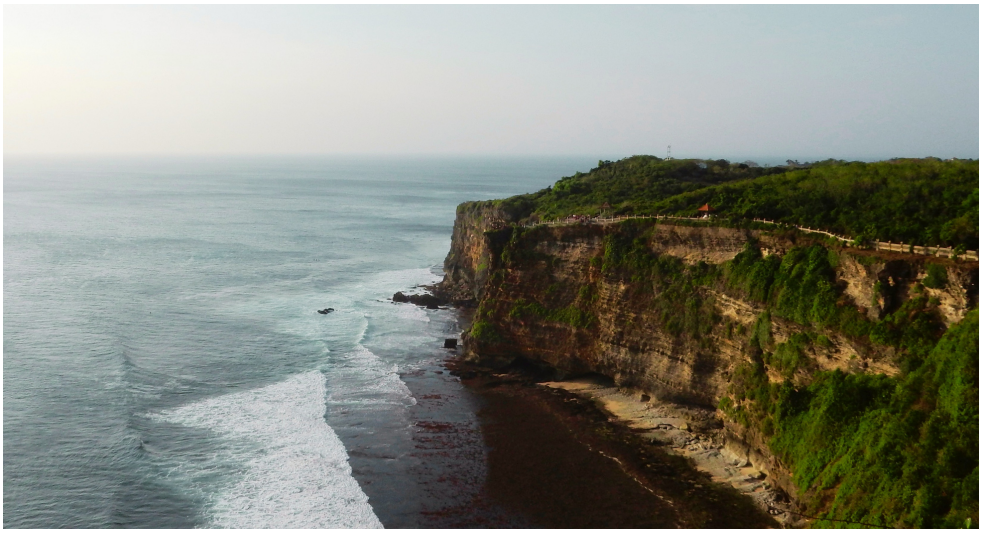

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OCTOBER 2021

Relaxation Tips For Pain Management

Can prolonged stress affect your pain and healing? There's a strong suggestion that it can, particularly with chronic pain. If you suffer from ongoing pain you may even have noticed this relationship yourself. Many people know that their pain is worse when they are stressed but they don't know why.

Stress activates your sympathetic nervous system, this is the state where we move into 'Fight, Flight or Freeze' mode. this part of our nervous system is responsible for keeping us safe when we are in danger, however, it can be activated for prolonged periods in modern life and many of us lack skills to return control to our parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for helping us to rest and digest.

How would this affect pain?

During this state, muscles become tensed and ready for action, the nervous system is extra sensitive to stimulus, blood pressure is raised and we are more likely to notice and have negative thoughts. Tense muscles can become tired and painful or put extra stress on other structures, causing pain and irritation. Quite often when in a stressed state, our breathing becomes shallow and rapid, particularly when doing work of low exertion, such as while sitting in an office.

Use your breathing to recover.

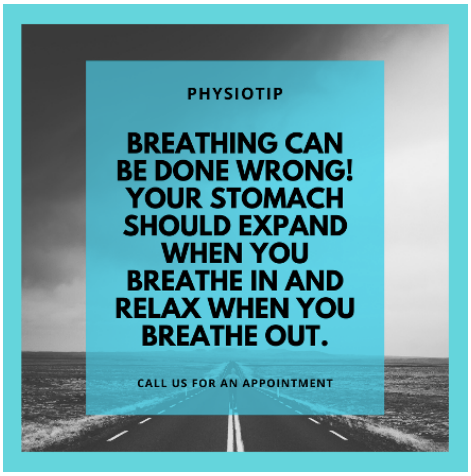
One way to help your body return control to the parasympathetic nervous system is to consciously change your breathing. One method is to hold your breath for as long as you can, once you relieve your breath your body senses that a threat has passed and can return to a relaxed state.

Another commonly used technique is box breathing. To do this, breathe in for four seconds, hold for four, breathe out for four, hold again for four and repeat. Do this for a few minutes until you start to feel more relaxed and calm.

Show your body that you are safe.

Other activities that can help your body to relax include yoga, going for a swim or having a shower, or doing some intense exercise where your heart rate is raised.

Speak to your physiotherapist for more information on this topic and tips to help you relax during the day.



Brain Teasers

1. What has to be broken before you can use it?

2. What question can you never answer yes to?

3. What is always in front of you but can't be seen?

Focus On High Ankle Sprains

What are they?

The ankle consists of three bones, the tibia, fibula and talus, all held together by thick fibrous ligaments. The bottom parts of the tibia and fibula join together and surround the talus in such a way that it is able to rock forwards and back while providing stability and restricting the side-to-side movements.

The ligaments holding the tibia and fibula together are large and thick (referred to as a syndesmosis) while a normal ankle sprain is a tear of the ligaments closer to the foot, a syndesmosis tear is called a "high" ankle sprain.

How do they happen?

A high ankle sprain can occur when you twist inwards while your foot is planted on the ground. The foot is typically pushed back and rotated outwards, putting excess pressure on the ligaments that the lower leg bones together. This force can cause the syndesmosis to tear resulting in a gapping of the two bones, which can lead to significant instability of the ankle. This can happen from every-day activities such as a fall, but most commonly while playing sports that involve running and jumping. This is also a common injury for downhill skiers. Patients are often unable to walk on their toes after this injury.

What is the difference between a high and a low ankle sprain?

High ankle sprains are much rarer than lower ankle sprains, accounting for only 1-11% of all ankle injuries. It can be very difficult to tell the two injuries apart. To complicate things, a fracture of the ankle will also have similar symptoms. Your physiotherapist will have a set of physical tests they can perform if they suspect a high ankle sprain. Ultimately imaging may be required to confirm the diagnosis.

Why does correct diagnosis matter?

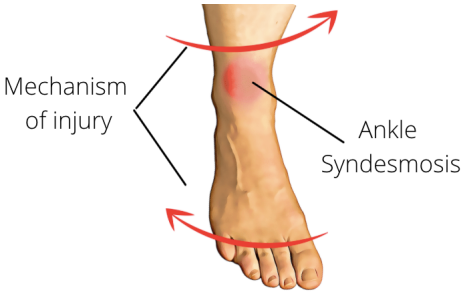
High ankle sprains can take up to two times longer to heal than normal ankle sprains and require more immediate attention. Syndesmosis tears that are left untreated can result in chronic instability and pain, making them vulnerable to further injury in the future.

What is the treatment?

Severe and unstable tears may require surgery and most syndesmosis tears will need to be put into a supportive boot for 4-6 weeks. Following this period a rehabilitation program of strengthening, mobilization, balance, control and agility will need to be commenced before your ankle will be at its pre-injury function.

Other medical interventions may be recommended in some cases and have been shown to have good results, when accompanied by a proper rehabilitation program.

None of the information in this newsletter is a replacement for proper medical advice. Always see a medical professional for advice on your injury.



Answers: 1. An egg. 2. Are you asleep yet? 3. The future

Saag Paneer

Ingredients:

1 tsp. Turmeric
1/2 tsp. Cayenne Pepper
1 tsp. Salt
3 Tbsp Oil
350g Paneer
400g Spinach
1 Onion, diced
1 thumb Ginger, minced
4 cloves Garlic
1 Green Chilli
1/2 tsp. Garam Masala
2 tsp. ground Coriander
1 tsp ground Cumin
1/2 cup Plain Yoghurt

1. Whisk turmeric, cayenne pepper, salt and oil together in a small bowl. Add cubed paneer and allow to marinate. Blanch spinach in boiling water, then blend until a paste or sauce forms
2. Pan-fry marinated paneer on medium heat until browned and set aside.
3. Saute onions, garlic, ginger and chilli slowly until caramel coloured Add a little water to soften. Add garam masala, cumin, coriander and cook well.
4. Add spinach and stir well. Add salt and half a cup of water, simmer with lid off for 10 minutes.
5. Remove from heat, stir through half a cup of yoghurt then return to heat and cook for a further 5 minutes. Stir through paneer.

Serve with rice or roti bread.

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