



LAKE MONOWAI - NEW ZEALAND

Physio Direct
Rural Physio at YOUR doorstep



NOVEMBER 2023

Strengthen to Lengthen, Does It Work?

Improving flexibility by stretching is a core tenant of most exercise programs. We have all heard the adage to stretch and warm-up before exercise to help prevent injuries and there is no doubt that stretching can just feel amazing! It can be surprising to learn that sometimes, the answer to improving flexibility can actually come from strengthening muscles, not just stretching them.

Why is this?

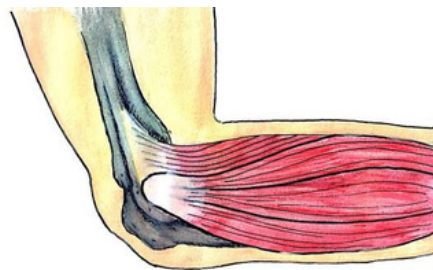
The muscles of the body are primarily responsible for its movement. By contracting and shortening they move their attachments closer together or by relaxing they allow their attachment to move apart in a controlled manner. The stronger and more coordinated muscles are, the more efficiently they are able to move the body more precisely and against more resistance.

This likely comes as no surprise, however what you may not realise is that muscles also play a large role in providing stability to the body, particularly around the more flexible joints such as the hip and shoulder. If needed, they will often prioritise their role as stabilisers over that of movers.

What does that mean?

If muscles are too weak to allow safe and controlled movement when needed, they might 'tighten up' to provide the stability necessary to keep your body upright. The less movement through range, the less blood flow muscles will be receiving, which can also lead to reduced muscle health and greater risk of injury. Increasing the strength of muscles can allow them to relax and move more freely, improving flexibility.

One of the reasons why strengthening to improve flexibility may seem counter intuitive is because many of have experienced muscle pain and stiffness after a strength workout, which can add to the perception that strengthening muscles shortens them. This pain and stiffness is usually short lived, reducing over 48 hours as muscle tissues return back to normal.



Do any strengthening exercises work?

While improving strength and coordination may allow muscles to 'relax', there is one type of strengthening exercise that will actually physically lengthen muscles by creating new muscle cells. Eccentric exercises, or 'controlled lengthening' have been shown to have a very beneficial effects on muscle health, length and even improve tendon health. Having a targeted eccentric training program to strengthen muscles has been shown to improve flexibility and reduce injuries overall.

Ask your physiotherapist for tips on training muscles to their optimal health to promote flexibility. Your physiotherapist is able to assess any muscles for weakness and reduced length, giving you a targeted program to improve function and reduce injuries.

PHYSIO FACT.
THE HUMAN HEART
PUMPS UP TO 200
MILLION LITRES OF
BLOOD DURING
THE AVERAGE
LIFETIME.



Brain Teaser

1. What has a neck but no head?
2. What can be cracked, made, told, and played?
3. I fly without wings. I cry without eyes. Whenever I go, darkness follows me. What am I?

PHYSIOTIP

BEING PAIN FREE ISN'T THE ONLY INDICATOR OF A FULL RECOVERY. STRENGTH, FLEXIBILITY, CONTROL AND BALANCE CAN STILL BE REDUCED WHEN THE PAIN HAS SUBSIDED.

CALL US FOR AN APPOINTMENT

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

The carpal tunnel is a small space base of the hand. This tunnel is covered by a thick ligament and creates a small tunnel where various nerves, arteries and tendons pass through from the forearm into the hand. If anything causes this space to be reduced, these structures can become compressed and damaged, particularly the median nerve. This common condition is referred to as Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS).

What are the symptoms?

The hallmark symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome are pain, numbness and weakness in the hand, usually following a typical pattern over the thumb, index and middle finger. There can also be a reduction in grip strength and wasting of the thumb muscles. Symptoms are usually worse on waking or with repetitive hand movements.

Patients might also report difficulty holding items, writing or doing up their buttons.

How does it happen?

Carpal tunnel syndrome can be caused by anything that reduces the space in the carpal tunnel, including arthritis, the growth of a cyst or compression from everyday activities. The median nerve is particularly vulnerable to compression and is of the most concern as prolonged compression can cause nerve damage and permanent weakness of the hands.

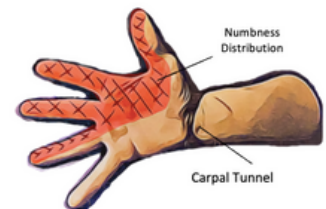
How is it treated?

There are a few different treatment options for CTS. Non-surgical treatment is often recommended first, which includes physiotherapy, wearing a splint, cortisone or plasma rich platelet injections to promote nerve healing. The effectiveness of physiotherapy will depend on the cause of your carpal tunnel. If the space of the tunnel has been reduced permanently, such as

with arthritis, then surgery is likely to be the most effective treatment. Carpal tunnel surgery is an operation to widen and release the carpal tunnel allowing decompression. This is a common surgery but is not without its risks or complications and requires a period of time off work for recovery.

For non surgical cases, altered biomechanics of the arm, the mobility of the median nerve and muscle tightness may all be contributing to symptoms. In this case, physiotherapy can be highly effective, along with a period of rest, splinting and a change in daily habits.

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. A bottle 2. A joke 3. A cloud

Turkish Eggs with Paprika

Ingredients:

- 4 large eggs
- 1 1/2 cups Greek yogurt
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Chopped fresh parsley
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon red chilli flakes



1. In a small saucepan over low heat, melt the butter. Once melted, stir in the paprika, ground cumin, red pepper flakes, and a pinch of salt. Mix well and let it infuse over low heat for a few minutes. Remove from heat and set aside.
2. In a mixing bowl, combine the Greek yogurt with the minced garlic. Add salt and pepper to taste, and stir well. Spread this yogurt mixture evenly onto the serving plates or shallow bowls.
3. Fill a large pot with water and bring it to a gentle simmer. Add eggs and for about 3-4 minutes for a soft yolk or longer for a firmer yolk.
4. Place the poached eggs on top of the yogurt mixture on each plate and drizzle the spiced butter generously over the eggs and bacon.

Garnish with chopped fresh parsley and sprinkle with pan fried bacon (optional)



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No GP referral needed!

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