

Bodywork & Exercise

Increase Body Awareness While Increasing Your Activity

Ruth Werner

You have to give us credit: as a culture, Americans are incredibly interested in getting fit. We invest every year in new diets, exercise programs, and supplements for weight loss and improved energy. Low-range estimates suggest that Americans spend about \$2.6 billion each year on gym memberships alone.

We also tend to pitch full speed into any given commitment. If we're going to get fit, by golly, we're going to do it now, regardless of how long it took us to get into our current state. We don't do things by half measures, and moderation is not in our nature. So how do we keep ourselves injury-free while honoring our commitment to exercise and get healthy?

sports field seems to appeal to our competitive spirit--especially when we're surrounded by others who all seem to be doing better than we are. Combine this kind of human drive with poorly trained athletic trainers who give bad advice about form, pacing, and effort, and we have a recipe for potential problems.

Exercise is only effective when it occurs without injury. Any new exercise program requires some caution, even if it is comparatively easygoing. And more challenging programs are safest and most successful when new participants build up their activity levels carefully and receive excellent guidance about form.

WHEN IT GOES WRONG

We accrue musculoskeletal and fascial

*Your path is at
your feet
whether you
realize it or
not.*

-Agnes Martin



Moderation is key when beginning a new exercise program

DOES IT HAVE TO BE ALL OR NOTHING?

We all know that starting an exercise program doesn't actually mean we'll finish it. When we throw ourselves into an ambitious new routine, we are likely to overdo it and get hurt. Then, we get discouraged, and may give up entirely, only to start the cycle over in another year or so.

Overdoing things in the gym or on the

injuries throughout our entire lifespans. In the best circumstances, they heal well, with a minimum of internal scar tissue, and function returns to practically normal levels. When things are ideal, that sprained ankle you got playing soccer at age 12 doesn't affect your ability to walk in your 30s. The lumbar

Continued on page 2

Office Hours and Contact

Katherine Graves, CMT, BHS
Bodywork Therapist
802-253-8427
www.stoweyoga.com
kgravesmt@gmail.com

In this Issue

Bodywork & Exercise
The Art of Bathing
The Case for Chocolate

Continued from page 1

strain you got from picking up the heavy laundry basket 15 years ago resolved well, so at 62, it won't hinder your golf game. We are able to adapt to minor injuries, and we learn how not to exacerbate them.

But when we introduce a new exercise program, especially if that exercise program is more demanding, or demanding in different ways than we have experienced before, we risk the flaring up of old injuries. Scar tissue does not have the weight-bearing capacity of healthy muscle or connective tissue. This is when that old sprained ankle may make itself known, and that weakness in your back will definitely have opinions about your new routine. Sometimes you might feel like your new commitment to fitness was not the best idea.

INJURIES CAN HAPPEN ANY TIME

CrossFit is one program that gets a lot of attention because of its reputation for being especially demanding. But any type of exercise can lead to injury if correct form is not observed. Zumba, Jazzercise, and other dance-like programs bring a risk of foot and leg injuries, including sprained ankles, plantar fasciitis, and stress fractures, because the risk for twisting at the knee is so high.

If you aren't paying close attention to your own limits, even yoga can be a source of soft-tissue injury: delayed soreness, problems at the neck and sacroiliac joints, or other injuries. One massage therapist reported seeing several injuries related to a prolonged yoga headstand, probably in a student who was not ready for this challenge.

HOW CAN MASSAGE HELP?

Massage can help you deal with pain or soreness from your exercise regimen and can also help shorten recovery periods so you can train more efficiently. Although massage therapists are not primary care providers, and cannot diagnose conditions or prescribe specific treatments, your therapist may be able to offer excellent advice for dealing with a fitness-related injury. He or she may also have suggestions about warm-ups, cool-downs, and postexercise stretching, or be able to point you to an appropriate coach or other professional for specific exercise needs and to help prevent future injury.

The incidence of exercise-related injury

has a lot to do with people not paying attention to their own needs. One of the many things massage therapy offers to people who want to become healthier and more fit is the chance to become more aware of your own body in a powerfully positive way. Increased body awareness and self-appreciation may be the best tools for helping you increase activity levels without hurting yourself. In this way, you can reach your goals with power and joy, rather than with pain and injury.

Ruth Werner is a former massage therapist, a writer, and a continuing education provider. She wrote A Massage Therapist's Guide to Pathology (Lippincott Williams + Wilkins, 2013).



Massage can get you back on track following an exercise-related injury

The Art of Bathing

Simple Recipes to Soothe Mind and Body

From bubble baths to essential oils to Dead Sea salts, prepared bath products are designed to enhance a bathing experience, but they can be expensive. Instead of spending the extra money on special bath products, try one of these natural, simple bath recipes with ingredients you probably already have in your cupboard or refrigerator.

Epsom Salts

ADD 2 CUPS EPSOM SALTS TO BATH WATER. Magnesium sulfate, or Epsom salts, has been used for centuries as a folk remedy, and research now confirms its numerous benefits. The second most abundant element in human cells and a crucial component for bone health, magnesium is also needed for muscle control, energy production, and the elimination of toxins. Magnesium eases stress, aids sleep, and improves concentration while reducing inflammation, joint pain, and muscle cramps. Sulfates help to flush toxins from the body, prevent or reduce headaches, and even improve brain function.

Most American diets are deficient in magnesium. However, one of the best ways to boost dietary intake is by bathing in Epsom salts, which are readily absorbed through the skin.

Milk

ADD 2-4 CUPS MILK OR BUTTERMILK TO BATH WATER.

Rich in calcium, protein, and vitamins, milk replenishes the skin, while lactic acid found in milk acts as a natural exfoliant. A member of the alpha hydroxy acid family, lactic acid breaks the glue-like bonds between the outer layer of dead skin cells. Soak in a milk bath for 20 minutes, then gently scrub skin with a loofah or washcloth.

Honey

ADD 1/4 CUP HONEY TO BATH WATER.

A fragrant, natural humectant, honey helps skin attract and retain moisture. Its antibacterial and anti-irritant properties make it an ideal cleansing and soothing additive to a warm bath.



Turn your home bath into a spa experience.

The Case for Chocolate

New Studies Show Health Benefits

It's not like we need a specific reason to eat chocolate, but it doesn't hurt that studies are finding increasing health benefits associated with the popular indulgence. While chocolate is high in sugar and saturated fat, it does contain chemical compounds with proven benefits, so enjoy--in moderation--and expect to reap some of these rewards.

Improved Heart Health

A study in the Archives of Internal Medicine found that women over 70 who ate chocolate at least once a week were 35 percent less likely to suffer from heart disease during the survey period. Researchers suspect that the flavonoids found in chocolate, which are known to reduce blood pressure, likely improve overall cardiovascular health.

Reduced Liver Strain

These same flavonoids in dark chocolate that help decrease blood pressure can also reduce post-meal abdominal blood pressure spikes that strain the liver by widening and relaxing blood cells. A Spanish study of patients with end-stage liver disease showed that dark chocolate helped reduce some of the risks associated with conditions like cirrhosis.

Safer Pregnancy

Dark chocolate has been shown to help pregnant women avoid preeclampsia--a significant complication where blood pressure spikes to dangerous levels--by nearly 40 percent when consumed five times a week. Dark chocolate is especially rich in theobromine, which relaxes muscles and dilates blood vessels. As an additional benefit, it also seems to

improve circulation in the placenta.

Increased Endurance

Research out of the University of California, San Diego, demonstrated that mice given epicatechin, a flavonoid found in dark chocolate, could run for 50 percent longer than those who only drank water. The mice also grew new capillaries and mitochondria in their muscles, changes that explain their enhanced endurance capacity. Unfortunately, perhaps, for chocolate lovers, is that researchers say just one-sixth of 1 ounce of chocolate each day is the ideal serving size to receive this benefit.

*All you have
been waiting for
is your own
permission.*

-Emmanuel

HUMMING!

Humming is relaxing and pleasurable. Humming sustained tones increases oxygen in cells, lymphatic circulation, endorphin release, nitric oxide levels, and melatonin. It also reduces blood pressure, heart rate, and stress hormones. Humming with intention, we can direct sound into areas of the body in need of healing. For further information, see *The Humming Effect: Sound Healing for Health and Happiness*, by Jonathan and Andi Goldman.

Stowe Yoga Center

PO Box 32

Stowe, VT 05672



Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals