

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

"Re-examine all that you have been told...dismiss that which insults your soul."

-Walt Whitman

Office Hours and Contact

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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

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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

Ease Growing Pains with Infant Massage

Gina Michelle

I'm writing this after a night when I was awakened by my 2-year-old at 4:00 a.m. He was pointing to his legs and saying, "Ow! Ow!" His first growing pains were here.

The childhood leg aches we call "growing pains" are normal, though nobody knows exactly why they happen. The massage therapist in me feels it may be a little inflammation cycle that kids experience after a hard day of play or athletics. I experienced growing pains periodically throughout my adolescence and remember how my legs ached and my joints throbbed. At times, the aches were so intense I was sure I had some sort of disease. "Is there such a thing as a leg-falling-off disease?" I asked my mother.

Little did I know that massage could help soothe these pains, or that someday I would use it to soothe my own son.

"I'M HAPPY, MAMA"

Learning infant massage has continued to be useful past my child's infancy. I credit it with decreasing the length of my

hospital stay for my firstborn, and since then, infant massage strokes have helped with childhood tummy aches, chest and sinus congestion, school-day jitters, and more.

At 4:00 a.m., I put on my robe and gently ease my son's legs from his PJs. I cover the rest of his body with his favorite blanket and then warm lotion between my hands. As my touch meets his pain, he sighs and says, "I'm happy, Mama."

I use the strokes I learned in an infant massage workshop. I follow my intuition and get to the deeper muscle fibers. Before I'm finished with the first leg, my baby boy is nearly asleep, but still conscious enough to tell me how the touch feels. As I start on his other leg, he has fallen into a light sleep. His breathing turns into a soft snore as I finish the massage. It only took 25 minutes, but our experience felt longer, sweeter.

Gina Michelle is a registered massage therapist of 13 years and former instructor at the Boulder College of

Massage Therapy and Denver School of Massage Therapy.



Therapeutic touch can soothe infants' discomfort

Skin Care Fresh From the Farm

Noreen Young

People are seeking beauty with a health twist, not just a product in a pretty jar. They want to see and feel the beautiful benefits when they use a product and know that they're putting the freshest of the fresh on their delicate skin.

A fresh approach to skin care is "in," and my mantra is not all beauty needs to come from a jar. Farmers' markets, organic farms, and health food stores are burgeoning in every city, and the freshest local fruit, vegetables, and herbs are waiting for you.

Here are some simple ways to help your skin benefit from the bounty of the summer harvest.

SWEET-AS-HONEY FACE MASK

Honey, a humectant and natural antiseptic, softens skin in its own sweet way.

1 soup spoon of honey

Cleanse your face and then wrap it with a warm, damp towel or facecloth (leave room to breathe!). Lie down and relax for at least 3 minutes. Apply the honey with a spatula on your clean face and leave on at least 10 minutes. Remove the honey mask with a facecloth and warm water. Apply a light moisturizer to your face and neck. Add eye gel or an eye cream.

SWEET SUGAR SCRUB

1/4 cup sunflower oil
4 tablespoons organic brown sugar

Mix the sugar and oil for a skin-softening exfoliating scrub. Massage this mixture on your skin and leave on at least 5 minutes. This treatment scrub can be used on the face, hands, or feet. Remove with a warm

facecloth.

CUCUMBER EYE PAD WITH A LAVENDER SUMMER SURPRISE

1/4 fresh cucumber
1 drop of lavender essential oil

Slice the cucumber thinly, place in a small bowl of fresh spring water, and refrigerate for 10 minutes. Add a drop of lavender essential oil and let the bowl rest on the counter a few minutes while the essential oil infuses into the cucumber. Place slices on your eyes to reduce puffiness or to relieve itchy, allergy eyes.

*"More people
would learn
from their
mistakes if they
weren't so busy
denying them."*

-Harold J. Smith

We are fortunate to live in an area that receives the four seasons. Spring has arrived and offers us a beautiful tapestry full of greenery and blossoms. Please indulge in the aromatherapy that nature offers this time of year! Wishing you a wonderful spring with an abundance of sunshine, moderate temperatures, and all the joys life has to offer:) To Good Health, Julia

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