

The Touch 4 Health & Wellness, LLC

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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 purpose of
our lives is to
be happy.*

-Dalai Lama



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.

Keeping Your Back Healthy

Tips to Avoid Lasting Pain

Chances are good that, at some point in your life, you will have back pain. In fact, 70-85 percent of Americans will experience back pain at some point in their lives. But even with those odds, there are still several ways to minimize your risk and give yourself the best chance to live pain-free.

Several factors can cause back pain, including stress, poor posture, bad ergonomics, lack of exercise, arthritis, osteoporosis, a sedentary lifestyle, overexertion, pregnancy, kidney stones, fibromyalgia, excess weight, and more.

With all of these potential causes lurking, it's important to look at behaviors that can help you prevent and avoid back pain before it starts. Here are a few simple healthy back tips from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke:

- Stretch and warm tissues before exercise or other strenuous activities.
- Practice good posture. Avoid

slouching when sitting or standing.

--When standing, keep your weight balanced on both feet.

--Follow good ergonomics in the workplace. When sitting for long periods of time, rest your feet on a foot support. Make sure your chair and work surfaces are at the proper height. Get up and move around in between long sitting stints.

--Avoid high-heeled shoes.

--Watch your weight. Excess weight, especially around the waist, can put undue stress on lower back muscles.

--Exercise. Core strengthening moves, especially, will also benefit your back.

--Don't lift items that are heavier than you can handle. Remember to lift with your knees, not your back. Pull in your stomach muscles, keep your head down and in line with your straight back, and do not twist when lifting.

--Get a massage. Using therapeutic bodywork can melt pain-inducing stress away from your back and the rest of your body.



Massage is a great way to beat back pain.

Boost Your Immune System

Lymphatic Drainage Therapy Fights Infection

Does your immune system work overtime? If so, you might want to give it a boost by seeing a massage therapist or bodyworker trained in lymphatic drainage therapy. This technique can boost your immunity by increasing the production of antibodies, stimulating circulation, moving congestion out of the body, and reducing swelling, especially after surgery.

The lymphatic system supports our body's immune function and involves several organs, glands, and tissues, hundreds of lymph nodes, and a network of vessels. A clear lymph fluid flows through these vessels and carries the metabolic waste (bacteria, dead cells, fats, fluids, proteins, and viruses) to the lymph nodes, where it is filtered. These nodes often swell when we are sick.

The lymphatic drainage techniques used by massage therapists and bodyworkers gently stimulate lymph nodes, help correct swelling and stagnation in those nodes, reduce local fluid retention, boost the overall immune system, and provide relaxation. As an essential tool in the treatment of lymphedema (excess lymphatic fluid), this therapy is often applied postoperatively and can be especially beneficial for breast cancer patients.

Administering this treatment requires advanced training and is performed with gentle, massage-like strokes. There should be no discomfort involved; in fact, you may feel you are hardly being worked on at all.

Aftercare

After your lymphatic drainage

treatment, it's possible you could feel some mild, flu-like symptoms, depending on how much strain your body has been under prior to treatment. This strain may be due to environmental pollutants, medication, and diet. Most people leave a session simply feeling relaxed, but if you don't feel at the top of your game, drink plenty of water, limit your salt intake, and stay physically active.

Lymphatic drainage is one way to give your wellness a boost in a busy world that makes many demands on your immune system.

*Get busy living
or get busy dying*
-Stephen King

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