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feelfit Physiotherapy

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THE CATLIINS - NEW ZEALAND

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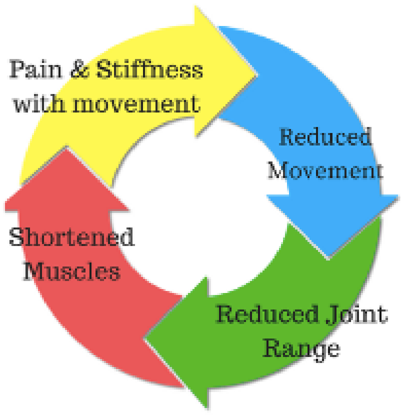
Why Do Joints Become Stiff?

While pain and stiffness often go together, you may have noticed a few stiff joints that are not painful. Joint stiffness can limit your ability to perform usual tasks and can be a warning sign that part of the body is vulnerable to future injury. There are many different causes of joint stiffness, and treatment of each type requires accurate assessment and diagnosis from a health professional. Here are a few of the most common causes of joint stiffness.



Disuse and lack of movement

When we are not regularly moving our joints through their full range, they can begin to feel 'tight'. This can be caused by a combination of the capsule that surrounds the joint tightening up and the muscles that surround the joint shortening and losing flexibility.

The easiest way to maintain full flexibility is to regularly move joints through their full range. This also helps to keep muscles and joints healthy.

Osteoarthritis (OA)

OA is a degenerative disease characterised by a breakdown of the joint surface cartilage and the growth of bony osteophytes around areas of stress. While OA is increasingly common as we age, it is thought that the primary cause is abnormal load and stress on joint surfaces, not simply ageing itself. As the joint space between two joint surfaces becomes uneven, joints affected by OA can feel stiff or even 'blocked'.

A person with OA will usually feel stiff for around 15–20 minutes after long periods of rest. Physiotherapy programs designed to strengthen the muscles surrounding the joints, and thereby help absorb weight-bearing forces, have been shown to have positive results on OA symptoms.

Inflammatory Related Stiffness

The inflammatory process causes swelling and pain around a specific area. As an area swells, there is less space for movement and a resulting sensation of stiffness — as anyone who has sprained an ankle can attest to. Autoimmune disorders can cause the body to mistakenly mount an inflammatory reaction where there has been no injury, resulting in pain and stiffness for long periods of time.

Treatment of any joint stiffness requires thorough assessment by a physiotherapist to identify the root cause of reduced flexibility. Speak to your physiotherapist if you're noticing reduced movement in your joints.

Brain Teasers

1. Turn me on my side, and I am everything. Cut me in half, and I am nothing. What am I?
2. Four cars arrive a four-way stop. They all go at the same time, but they don't crash. How is this possible?

Focus On Stress Fractures

What is a Stress Fracture?

A stress fracture is a microscopic fracture of the bone that is so small it often cannot be picked up on an X-ray. If left untreated, a stress fracture can cause significant disability and may develop into a full fracture, possibly even requiring surgery.

The majority of stress fractures occur in the lower limb, being particularly common in the hip, shins, and foot at points where the most force passes through when weight-bearing. Most stress fractures are overuse injuries and are common in long-distance runners.

What are the Symptoms?

As with many overuse injuries, the pain of a stress fracture starts gradually, beginning with pain during or after activity, or sometimes the morning after. If activity continues without modification, the pain will gradually increase. Eventually, most people are unable to maintain their usual activity level. Stress fractures are common in runners and military personnel who are required to march for long periods.

A stress fracture is more likely to occur in someone with weaker bone strength, such as a person with osteoporosis, which is itself affected by many factors such as inadequate calcium intake, vitamin D deficiency, and a history of inactivity.

How are Stress Fractures Treated and How Long Will It Take to Get Better?

Stress fractures can easily be mistaken for other conditions such as shin splints. As the fracture is often too small to show up on an X-ray, a definitive diagnosis can be made using an MRI or bone scan.

After diagnosis, the most important part of treatment is resting the affected area to allow the bone to heal before resuming activity. Stress fractures usually need at least six weeks to recover fully. Some areas of the body have a poor blood supply, which makes healing more complicated. For example, stress fractures of the navicular bone in the foot may need to be immobilised in a boot or cast for a period of time to heal properly.

Other aspects of treatment will involve correcting any factors that contributed to the original injury. There is some evidence that unsupportive footwear is a risk factor, along with poor biomechanics and weak muscles that provide inadequate support to the skeletal system during activity. Speak to your physiotherapist if you suspect you may have a stress fracture or simply want to know more.

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. The number 8 2. They all turn left

Roasted Cauliflower And Quinoa Salad

Ingredients:

1 Head Cauliflower
1 Small Red Onion
2 Tbsp. Olive Oil
1 handful Fresh Coriander
2 Clove of Garlic
1 tsp. Turmeric
1/2 tsp. Cumin
2 cups Quinoa
1 fresh Tomato
1/4 cup sliced Almonds
Salt and Pepper

1. Preheat oven to 180 degrees Celsius and line a baking tray with baking paper. Chop cauliflower into small cubes and drizzle with olive oil, turmeric and cumin. Slice onion into very small strips and add cauliflower pieces to a baking tray and cook for 30 minutes until soft and brown. Remove from heat and set aside.
2. In a medium-sized mixing bowl, add diced coriander (or basil), diced garlic, white balsamic vinegar, olive oil, diced tomato, almonds, salt and pepper. Mix together and set aside.
3. Bring a medium pot of water to boil and salt slightly. Add 2 cups of quinoa and cook for 5-10 minutes until cooked. Strain excess water and stir through olive oil mixture. Add roasted cauliflower and serve when ready.

feelfit Physiotherapy

136 Gympie Road
(cnr Brookfield Rd)
Kedron, QLD 4031

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(07) 3357 1803

www.feelfit.com.au

rosemary@feelfit.com.au

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