

Newsletter 2022

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Physiotherapy - the difference is in our hands



The Newlands Physiotherapy Practice - our latest news

Warm greetings from all of us here at Newlands Physiotherapy. We haven't sent out a newsletter for the last while as our focus has really been on keeping the practice a safe and nurturing space. A big thank you to all of you who repeatedly packed your towels and pillows so willingly during the past two years - it has been a huge help. We are thrilled to have been able to relax our protocol a little and look forward to welcoming you with a smile.

Kerry continues to be involved in the various physiotherapy committees and is mentoring on the post grad diploma in manual therapy and loves her regular hiking.

Lara is doing a bit of mentoring on the post grad diploma in manual therapy and spending lots of time running in the mountains with Joey, who many of you give the attention he asks for standing at the sliding door!

Pauline has been running the Practice for 33 years and is enjoying being a Granny to two year old Kayla, who some of you may have seen running around in the garden.

We are always so grateful to **Avril** for running our reception so efficiently. **Di** has retired but still joins us for our end of year dinner and continues to ask after those of you who she got to know so well.



Annual end of year dinner.

Some interesting thoughts about back pain

Back pain affects most of us at some stage of our lives. We recently attended a webinar by Professor Peter O’Sullivan, one of the leading researchers of back pain. He points out that there are a number of factors that can contribute to an episode of back pain. These include periods of high stress, increased fatigue, poor sleep and periods of inactivity.

The past few years have certainly challenged us, and perhaps some of these potential triggers sound familiar? This means we need to think more broadly and holistically when assessing and managing back pain. And there has been a shift, with more focus on exploring the experience and context of the person with back pain, including their beliefs, fears, concerns and expectations.

In his research, Prof O’Sullivan has identified several unhelpful beliefs about back pain. They are learnt through various social, cultural and environmental influences and are probably quite familiar to many of us. These beliefs influence our behaviour and psychological response to back pain. However, these unhelpful beliefs about back pain are associated with greater levels of pain, disability, absence from work, medication use and healthcare seeking.

We have included Prof O’Sullivan’s Myth busting “10 back facts”. It is a challenge to all of us to educate ourselves on evidence based information and care of back pain..... and may change some of your “back beliefs”!

Ref: O’Sullivan et al (2020) Back to Basics:
10 facts everyone should know about back pain,
Br J Sports Med 54(12) 689-699

<https://twitter.com/PeteOSullivanPT/status/1212230740181536769/photo/1>

Back Facts

Persistent back pain can be scary, but it's rarely dangerous

Persistent back pain can be distressing and disabling, but it's rarely life-threatening and you are very unlikely to end up in a wheelchair.

Getting older is not a cause of back pain

Although it's a widespread belief and concern that getting older causes or worsens back pain, research doesn't support this, and evidence-based treatments can help at any age.

Persistent back pain is rarely associated with serious tissue damage

Backs are strong. If you have had an injury, tissue healing occurs within three months, so if pain persists past this time, it usually means there are other contributing factors. A lot of back pain begins with no injury or with simple, everyday movement. These occasions may relate to stress, tension, fatigue, inactivity or unaccustomed activity which make the back sensitive to movement and loading.

Scans rarely show the cause of back pain

Scans are only helpful in a minority of people. Lots of scary sounding things can be reported on scans such as disc bulges, degeneration, protrusion, arthritis, etc. Unfortunately, the reports don't say that these findings are very common in people without back pain and they don't predict how much pain you feel or how disabled you are. Scans can also change, and most disc prolapses shrink over time.

Pain with exercise and movement doesn't mean you are doing harm

When pain persists, it is common that the spine and surrounding muscles become really sensitive to touch and movement. The pain you feel during movement and activities reflects how sensitive your structures are - not how damaged you are.

So, it's safe and normal to feel some pain when you start to move and exercise. This usually settles down with time as you get more active. In fact, exercise and movement are one of the most effective ways to help treat back pain.

Back pain is not caused by bad posture

How we sit, stand and bend does not cause back pain even though these activities may be painful. A variety of postures are healthy for the back. It is safe to relax during everyday tasks such as sitting, bending and lifting with a round back - in fact, it's more efficient!

Back pain is not caused by a 'weak core'

Weak 'core' muscles do not cause back pain, in fact, people with back pain often tense their 'core' muscles as a protective response. This is like clenching your fist after you have sprained your wrist. Being strong is important when you need the muscles to switch on but being tense all the time isn't helpful. Learning to relax 'core' muscles during everyday tasks can be helpful.

Backs do not wear out with everyday loading or bending

The same way lifting weights makes muscles stronger, moving and loading make the back stronger and healthier. So, activities like running, twisting, bending and lifting, are safe if you start gradually and practice regularly.

Pain flare-ups don't mean you are damaging yourself

While pain flare-ups can be very painful and scary, they are not usually related to tissue damage. The common triggers are things like poor sleep, stress, tension, worries, low mood, inactivity or unaccustomed activity. Controlling these factors can help prevent exacerbations, and if you have a pain flare-up, instead of treating it like an injury, try to stay calm, relax and keep moving!

Injections, surgery or strong drugs usually aren't a cure

Spine injections, surgery and strong drugs like opioids aren't very effective for persistent back pain in the long term.

When visiting our website, www.newlandsp physio.co.za click on **view our newsletter** and you will see two sections:

- **Newlands Physio**, where you will find our previous Newsletters.
- **PhysioBiz**, is the monthly newsletter from the South African Society of Physiotherapy (SASP - established in 1924). There are tips and information on health events, health conditions, various injuries and self help tips.

We also all continue to keep up to date with lectures and courses organised by the Special Interest Physiotherapy Groups, namely the Western Cape ANMS, Sports and Pain Management groups.

Further information about these groups is available on the SASP website - www.saphysio.co.za

We have 4 back rehab classes a week (still on Zoom at this stage):

Monday	17h00 - 18h00
Tuesday	08h00 - 09h00 and 09h00 - 10h00
Thursday	17h15 - 18h00

The practice hours by appointment are:

Monday - Friday	07h00 - 18h00
Saturdays	09h00 - 12h00