



Why am I hurting?

Welcome to PhysioBiz, with healthcare advice and information you can trust and rely on, brought to you by the South African Physiotherapy Society!

“Sometimes things happen to our bodies that are puzzling and even worrying, but we don’t know where to turn to find out what it means and whether we need to be concerned,” says Rogier van Bever Donker, President of the South African Society of Physiotherapy. “A physiotherapist – a first-line practitioner whom you can consult without a referral – has extensive knowledge of anatomy and physiology, and will be able to assess your symptoms, diagnose and treat or refer you to the right specialist for treatment, so that’s a good place to start.”

Some strange symptoms which physios can help you understand and, in some cases, also treat:

- **Pounding headaches**

If you have headaches that cause a sensation of tightness across your forehead, around the sides of your head or at the back, chances are this is caused by the muscles of the scalp and neck contracting. This is very often a response to stress, depression and anxiety. Your physiotherapist can help by working on the physical symptoms; she or he can also help you with advice and tools to help manage the stress.

- **Vertigo**

You moved your head, and now you feel as if the world is spinning; you may feel nauseous and find it difficult to maintain your balance. A few episodes like this, and you’ll definitely want medical help!

“Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (or BPPV) is the most common cause of vertigo,” write the experts on Vestibular.org. It’s a condition of the ear which affects balance – some little crystals important to balance get dislodged and move into a part of the ear where they shouldn’t be. “It causes episodes of vertigo, triggered by movement and changes in position. BPPV can be effectively treated with the appropriate mechanical manoeuvres performed by a qualified healthcare professional.” Your physiotherapist knows just what to do – it’s an effective technique involving simply moving the head and body in specific ways that encourage those little crystals to go back to where they belong.

- **Balance impairment and dizziness – another version**

Another cause of balance problems might be a whiplash injury. Sometimes the whiplash itself was fairly mild, so you may not connect the dots between the injury and your balance problem. Physiotherapy treatment has been shown to very effective in treating balance impairment following whiplash, so do consult a physio.

- **Numbness and tingling in the hand**

Do you feel tingling, numbness and even pain in the thumb, index finger and maybe the middle fingers of your hand? If you give your hand a quick shake, it might go away, so you're not really worried. But with these symptoms, you might be in the early stages of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, a debilitating and painful condition where inflammation squeezes an important nerve. It can cause severe distress and sleepless nights as it progresses, but is certainly treatable, so consult your physiotherapist before it goes any further.

- **Uncontrolled urination**

Do you know how many people experience what is called 'urinary incontinence'? It's huge: "Population studies from numerous countries have reported that the prevalence of UI ranged from approximately 5% to 70%, with most studies reporting a prevalence of any UI in the range of 25–45%." (I. Milsom & M. Gyhagen (2019) The prevalence of urinary incontinence, *Climacteric*) Although it mostly affects women, it does occur in men, too.

It can range from a little spurt as you hit the ball while playing tennis, to such uncertainty about flow that you avoid going out lest you be caught short.

Few people realise that a physiotherapist can really make a profound difference to your life, with treatment and exercises that improve your control of your urine. A physiotherapist with an interest in the pelvic floor muscles can help you if you are in the very early stages – and if your incontinence is really bad. So consult your physiotherapist now!

To find a physiotherapist, visit www.saphysio.co.za.