# NERANG PHYSIOTHERAPY

## Peter Mitchell

### Physiotherapy for the whole family

Newsletter August 2014

Unit 8/5-7 Lavelle Street, Address Line 2, Address Line 3, Nerang
Tel: (07) 5596 4711 Fax: (07) 5596 7986
**Email: nerangphysiotherapy@onthenet.com.au www.nerangphysio.com.au**

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR PAIN

Some of the most common comments made by patients include, "I did not do anything to cause my pain…" or "I just woke up one morning with pain…" or "I don't remember doing anything to cause it…".

We all know the pain that comes with trauma, we get a kick to the shin, stub our toes, get tackled in rugby, etc. but what about those pains that appear as if out of the blue with no obvious cause? Where does this begin?

My experience in the last 2 decades has resulted in a proposed chain of events that lead to the most common of pains that we experience. This chain of events occurs mostly without our knowledge and only becomes evident when pain strikes.

The problem is that when the pain does strike we are led to believe that THAT is when the problem began, however, in the majority of cases the problem started many days, weeks, months or even years before.

Even injuries like muscle strains are perceived to be an acute injury with no history yet when we assess the mechanical picture we see that the injury is often at the end of a chain of asymptomatic events that has been ongoing for a lot longer.

So what is this chain of events? In a nutshell the starting point is not even mechanical but functional. The dysfunction begins in the Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS) that controls the blood flow around the body. During any form of stress large or small, a one-off or accumulation of smaller stresses, this nervous system becomes stressed having to increase the blood flow rate to meet the demand.

This demand could be physical, mental or emotional. No matter what the cause, the SNS will become fatigued. This results in altered blood flow rate to certain parts of the body.

When this happens our soft tissues become tight resulting in early stiffness, often worse in the morning. Most of the time we are not aware of this stiffness as subconsciously the body can compensate with other movements to get the job done. At a later stage it may become more obvious. ***Stiffness is a pre-cursor to pain.***

The next phase is weakness which occurs when the muscles receive less than optimum blood flow rate. Weakness again goes unnoticed in the early stages as other muscles compensate well to maintain good function. However it is this compensation that results in the problem spreading and overuse of muscles not designed to take that extra load for too long.

This results in more stiffness and more weakness until eventually with a lack of good flexibility and strength, soft tissues are stressed beyond their capabilities and joints are strained resulting in pain. It is not uncommon for the pain to be nowhere near the original weakness or stiffness as the body is designed to compensate and do what it can with what it's got.

Pain can be very misleading most of the time, as the saying goes, "Look for the pain and then look somewhere else for the cause."

So it is easy to see that treating the site of the pain can often lead to incomplete repair as the true causes are being left un-treated. At Nerang Physiotherapy we assess and treat all areas responsible and the focus is on the areas that are faulty, not just those areas that are painful.

## EXERCISE OF THE MONTH:

## THE SCARECROW

Here is something you might want to do before trying the brain-teaser. Why? 'Cos this little gem of an exercise is great for improving brain function, memory and reversing some dyslexic tendencies!

Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Raise both elbows till they are comfortable and near parallel with the floor. Let the forearms and hands 'dangle' down towards the floor like a scarecrow. This is the starting position.

Now move one elbow towards the midline in front of you keeping it parallel to the ground and at the same time rotate the forearm so the hand is now pointing up. Lift the opposite leg up as if to meet the elbow. Do this to your own comfortable height to remain balanced.

Return to the starting position and do the same with the opposite elbow and knee. Once you have mastered the movements, start doing this with a gentle speed as you would if you were walking on the spot. Do for 2 to 5 minutes daily.

This cross-crawl movement stimulates both sides of the brain to communicate and thus increases co-ordination, memory and learning, especially for kids.

It can be made more fun for kids by varying the arm and leg action as long as the opposite arm and leg come up at the same time. Give it a go and feel your brain expand!


## BRAIN TEASER OF THE MONTH

A man has to get a fox, a chicken, and a sack of corn across a river. He has a rowboat, and it can only carry him and one other thing. If the fox and the chicken are left together, the fox will eat the chicken. If the chicken and the corn is left together, the chicken will eat the corn. How does the man do it?

## WHAT IS TENNIS ELBOW?

True tennis elbow, otherwise known as Lateral Epicondylitis, that stems from playing tennis actually begins with the serve action. The pain in the elbow is just the end result of a series of compensations that take place after the initial overuse.

The serve entails a lot of effort by muscles in the shoulder that rotate the arm forward from behind the body. If an overuse point is reached resulting in fatigue of these muscles, then the body naturally incorporates the triceps muscles in the arm to assist in getting the serve action completed.

This results in overuse of the triceps, whose main job is to straighten the elbow, but now as they fatigue, forearm muscles designed to pull the wrist back are used to compensate for the triceps resulting in tightness of the soft tissues wrapping around these muscles.

This tightness puts excessive strain on the attachments of these muscles at the elbow, hence Tennis Elbow Pain.

## Have a laugh

A few old couples used to get together to talk about life and to have a good time. One day one of the men, Harry, started talking about this fantastic restaurant he went to the other night with his wife. "Really?", one of the men said, "what's it called?" After thinking for a few seconds Harry said, "what are those good smelling flowers called again?" "Do you mean a rose?" the first man questioned. "Yes that's it," he exclaimed. Looking over at his wife he said, "Rose what's that restaurant we went to the other night?"

**Tip of the month:**

If you are a keen gym-ster, try to work with as many asymmetrical exercises as possible to prevent brain dyslexia and overuse. Symmetrical exercises can be stressful to the body.

**Answers: First, the man carries chicken and leaves chicken. He comes back and gets the fox. Then, he leaves the fox and gets the chicken. He leaves the chicken and gets corn. And finally, he leaves the fox and corn to get the chicken.**