

# healthier YOU

your healthy living newsletter



## Female Athletes & Knee Injuries

One of the injuries that Physiotherapists see on a regular basis are knee ligament tears. Ligaments attach from one bone to another and help to hold everything in place when we're up and moving. Tear a ligament and all of a sudden bones are moving in ways that they shouldn't. One of the ligaments we often see damaged in the knee is the **Anterior Cruciate Ligament** or **ACL**. Treatment for complete tears of this important ligament often require surgery and **6-9 months of physiotherapy** and exercise. It's a long process and some people never fully recover to their pre-injury level of function.

Research shows us that **women are 2-10 times more likely to experience this injury** than male athletes. ACL injuries often occur during landing from a jump and hyper-extending the knee or during a plant-and-twist which is where the foot is planted on the ground while the athlete is trying to change direction.

The recovery from an ACL injury is often long and frustrating for athletes. **Can you prevent these injuries?** Absolutely. Most intervention programs have been shown to reduce the rate of ACL injuries amongst female athletes by approximately 80%. Here are the steps to take to help reduce the rate of these injuries:

## How to prevent an ACL injury

**Technique** – Reducing the potential for sudden stress to the ACL minimizes the risk of injury

- When landing from a jump, focus on have bent knees at all times
- During direction changes while running, try to make rounded turns as opposed to plant-and-twist turns

**Strength** – Improving the strength of the muscles around the knee and hip means those muscles can absorb more of the stresses and the ACL is better protected

- Squats, hamstring curls, calf raises, core stability training, and plyometric training (jump and power training)

**Balance** – The better the athlete's balance and stability on the knee, the less likely the knee is to twist into dangerous positions

- Training on unstable surfaces such as wobble boards, uneven ground, and soft mats

Preventing these injuries is possible with the right training program. Talk to your local Physiotherapist about how to properly prepare to prevent these injuries from occurring.

## Moulds and Fungi

Health Canada estimates that the average Canadian spends **90% of his or her time inside**. Given our exposure to indoor air, making sure that its healthy air is important. One issue with indoor air is the possible presence of **moulds and fungi** that can slowly grow over time when given enough food and a damp environment.

Some degree of mould and fungus is almost always present in any building. Keeping this in check can be helpful especially to those with asthma and allergies as well as the elderly and very young children whose immune systems are less capable of dealing with foreign substances.

### Health Canada's tips to reduce mould and fungal growth in your home:

- Keep humidity levels below 50% in the summer and 30% in the winter ( a hygrometer costs about \$25 and measures humidity)
- Address water leaks and ensure that areas where leaks occur are dried up quickly
- Reduce dust in the house (a source of food for moulds and fungi)
- Ensure adequate ventilation throughout your home
- Regularly disinfect air conditioners and humidifiers/dehumidifiers
- If you find mould or fungi, clean the area with soap and ensure it is dried well afterwards

## Danger in your Kitchen

You know a sponge can harbor nasty germs, but a recent study of hundreds of homes across the **United States** found that about **7% of kitchen towels were contaminated with MRSA** (methicillin –resistant Staphylococcus aureus), the difficult-to-treat staph bacteria that can cause life- threatening skin infections. Dish towels also rated tops for dangerous strains of E. coli and other bacteria.

Laundry the cloth towels twice per week in hot water and bleach.



# ✓ Pandemic Home Emergency Checklist ✓

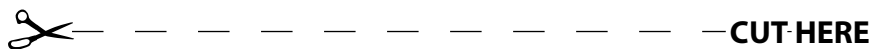


It is wise for all of us to be ready for any emergency situation which may occur. It is at the front of mind for many Canadians with greater awareness given the H1N1 Global Pandemic status. Some of the following ideas may help you and your family to be better prepared for a number of emergencies which can limit your ability to access goods and materials from outside your home.

## To be as "Emergency Ready" as possible you may wish to keep the following items handy:

- ☑ Pain and fever medication
- ☑ Thermometer
- ☑ Extra supply of essential medication (talk with your doctor about what you should keep on hand)
- ☑ Over the counter medications (anti-diarrhea medicine, vitamins)
- ☑ Cleaning supplies (disinfecting wipes or sprays)
- ☑ Tissues/paper towels
- ☑ Soap/alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- ☑ Non-perishable food
- ☑ Fluids (water)
- ☑ Supplies for children (diapers etc.)
- ☑ Consider extra water for pets (1 litre/day for a medium sized dog)
- ☑ Pet foods and medications
- ☑ Post emergency & important phone numbers
- ☑ Set up a buddy contact to check up on each other

[getprepared.ca](http://getprepared.ca) is the Government of Canada's web site which will give you helpful planning tips for a 72 hour emergency plan.



## Your Teeth and Your Heart

The American Journal of Cardiology and the Journal of Periodontology recently released a joint statement about the impact of periodontitis on the risk of heart disease.

While there is still some question about the link between gum disease and heart disease, results from recent large studies seem to indicate that periodontitis is a direct contributor to the risk of heart disease.

Periodontitis, a form of gum disease, is a bacterial infection of the mouth that affects the bone and connective tissue that surround the teeth. Over time this can lead to swollen or bleeding gums, loose teeth and chronic bad breath. Periodontitis is quite common, with 30-50% of adults showing some signs of it.

How periodontitis can lead to heart disease is still not quite clear but researchers have proposed a few mechanisms. One effect of periodontitis is the increase in the levels of inflammatory chemicals that are present in the blood. Sustained levels of these inflammatory chemicals, caused by the inflammation in the tissues around the teeth, can result in chemicals or bacteria getting into the bloodstream.

This inflammation, when ongoing, can lead to scarring of muscle tissue like the heart and damage to the blood vessels throughout the body. This may decrease the ability of the blood to get to critical areas like the brain and heart tissue. The loss of blood flow to these tissues is what causes heart attacks and strokes.

### Improving Your Heart Health

- 🔴 Visit your dentist regularly for professional cleaning
- 🔴 Brush and floss consistently and often
- 🔴 Talk to your dentist about the health of your teeth and gums so that you know your periodontal status
- 🔴 Stop smoking as this is a risk factor for both heart disease and periodontitis
- 🔴 Talk to your family physician about your risk of heart disease including blood pressure, cholesterol levels and blood sugar levels.
- 🔴 Eat a heart-healthy low-fat, high-fibre diet
- 🔴 Exercise regularly

### ABOUT OUR EDITORS

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Dr. Westaway is a Physiotherapist and researcher at LifeMark Village Square & Westside in Calgary. He has a special interest in neck pain and rehabilitation.

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**Coming up in our next issue:**  
Working and Working Out in the Cold  
Spot Reduction

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If you have a pre-existing medical condition/injury or are in pain, please consult you health care professional prior to changing your diet or commencing any exercise.

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