



healthier YOU

your healthy living newsletter

Get Your **Body** Back After **Baby!**

It's natural to rehabilitate yourself after a shoulder or knee injury prior to returning to tennis or running, so why wouldn't you do the same after having a baby?

Many muscles are under great strain and get weak during nine months of pregnancy, not to mention those that are damaged during childbirth. Many women are eager to get back into pre-pregnancy shape and return to previous recreational pursuits, but without properly rehabilitating weak muscles, they are at risk for injury.

Muscles that have been stretched and weakened during pregnancy include:

- **Deep abdominal** muscles
- **Lower back** stabilizers
- **Pelvic floor** muscles

Altered breathing patterns also occur during development as baby during delivery pushes up on the diaphragm. During labour and delivery pelvic floor muscles are further stretched and often torn and need to be rehabilitated. Your abdominal wall is further compromised in the event of a caesarian section. Unfortunately, many women are not given exercises that effectively target these areas post-partum and may end up compensating with other muscles, further breaking down the body over time.

Without addressing the changes that have occurred in your body, the following problems may develop:

- **Urinary incontinence**, pelvic girdle pain or pelvic organ prolapse (uterus or bladder slips out of its proper place)
- **Lower back pain** which left unchecked could eventually lead to early degeneration of the spine
- **Hip pain** and clicking due to compensation with hip/buttock muscles that compress the hip joint in its socket, placing wear on the hip
- **Shortness of breath** on exertion and suboptimal performance during physical activities

Seeking a physiotherapist trained in this type of rehabilitation can teach you to re-activate the pelvic floor, deep abdominals and lower back muscles, which will assist in avoiding compensation strategies. Restoring proper muscle balance will allow you to return to your previous pursuits and prevent future problems. Whether you had your baby recently or decades ago, now is the time to put yourself back together. It's never too late!



SHOULD YOU TAKE ANTI-INFLAMMATORY MEDICATION BEFORE A GAME?

If you know that skiing for the first time this year or your upcoming basketball game will leave you sore, why not take an anti-inflammatory (such as Advil or Motrin) beforehand to help reduce the pain and discomfort? This is the approach taken by many athletes; 25% of Olympic athletes report taking these drugs prior to their event, 23% of professional soccer players use anti-inflammatories prior to World Cup games, and finally, some high school football players in the U.S. report taking these medications daily during the season.

An article in the British Journal of Sports Medicine takes issue with regular use of anti-inflammatory medication. The study's author, Dr. Warden of Indiana University, points out the potential side-effects of anti-inflammatory use when used in this way. These include potential for damage to the stomach and intestines as well as the cardiovascular system. The more these medications are used, the greater it becomes for these risks to occur.

There is also the risk of slower healing and tissue rebuilding while using these medications. This has been shown to be true for injuries to bone and may be true for other tissues like muscles, tendons and ligaments.

Anti-inflammatory medication does have its place when dealing with acute injuries and when pain limits quality of life. Athletes, and everyone else, should discuss any prolonged use with their physician or pharmacist.



S T R O K E



Imagine a marble moving through a garden hose, the marble and the water move along fine until the marble reaches a spot where the hose is a bit kinked and it gets stuck. What happens to the water flow? It stops.

This is one of the ways that strokes can occur in the brain. The blood flow can be interrupted by a clot or a tear can occur in the artery wall causing blood to leak out instead of going where it needs to go.

When blood doesn't get to the brain cells, the cells begin to die within a few minutes. Depending on the area of the brain that is affected, this can lead to many types of problems including muscle weakness, confusion, poor balance, and in some cases death.

Unfortunately, strokes are quite common. The Heart and Stroke Foundation reports that a stroke occurs every ten minutes in Canada. 15% of these patients don't survive the stroke and only 10% recover without any lasting damage. This leaves over 37,000 Canadians to deal with the consequences of strokes each year.

Like many issues related to our long-term health, the best treatment is prevention. Following Canada's Food Guide in order to help maintain a healthy body weight and low levels of bad fats (Low Density Lipids) in the blood is a great first step. Ensuring that regular exercise is a part of your daily routine (at least 20 minutes daily) is also essential.

If a stroke does occur, immediate treatment is essential to minimize damage to brain tissue.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation lists five key warning signs that require emergency assistance:

- Weakness - Sudden loss of strength or sudden numbness in the face, arm or leg, even if temporary.
- Trouble speaking - Sudden difficulty speaking or understanding or sudden confusion, even if temporary.
- Vision problems - Sudden trouble with vision, even if temporary.
- Headache - Sudden severe and unusual headache.
- Dizziness - Sudden loss of balance, especially with any of the above signs.

Chocolate Good for your Valentine & Good for your Health

Aztecs called it the drink of the gods and felt it provided divine benefits to those who consumed it. Research shows that it may actually be true. An article published by the American Heart Association reviews the findings of multiple studies that have demonstrated that chocolate has health benefits ranging from decreased blood pressure, increased insulin sensitivity, improved heart circulation and overall decreased risk of death.



Chocolate does come with fat, calories and sugar however so, eating large quantities still isn't a good idea. However when eaten in moderation, chocolate may be good for your sweet heart and great for their health too.

When selecting chocolate, go for the **Dark Chocolate** as it has been found to have a higher proportion of the active chemicals that scientists feel are the source of the health benefits.

Shining a Light on the Winter Blues

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is often referred to as the winter blues and affects over 1.4 million Canadians each fall and winter. Symptoms can include depression, lack of energy, sleepiness and overeating. Much of the time, these symptoms disappear as spring and summer return, only to crop up again the next fall.

SAD is treatable and patients experiencing these symptoms should speak with their family physician about treatment options. Several approaches have been shown to be effective with various others still under investigation.

Light therapy is often used as a first line treatment and involves being exposed to especially bright lights for anywhere from 30 minutes to 2 hours per day. These lights are commercially available and often provide several times the light of normal household lights. For best results, exposure to the light first thing in the morning may be more effective than later in the day.

Proven benefits with few side-effects have also been demonstrated with the use of antidepressant medications-as reported by a Canadian research team from Vancouver studying the treatment of SAD

If you feel you are suffering more than you should with the onset of winter, speak with your health professional.



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Coming up in our next issue:
Vitamin D during the Winter
Prevention of Running Injuries

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

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H E A L T H

