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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Stretch Out

A few precautions can prevent future pain

Kelli Crosby

You brush your teeth daily because you don't want cavities or gum disease, right? Well, what do you do on a daily basis to prevent tension in your neck? Brushing your teeth offers you preventive dental care, but what if you could learn to be preventive with the rest of your body?

We all have bad daily habits we don't even notice until something starts to hurt. These bad habits are the root cause of many painful conditions. To help prevent pain, however, we can turn these bad habits into good habits that can be worked into our daily routine. Here is some general advice that can apply to almost every part of daily living.

Sit Up Straight.

Sit in a chair with your hands on your hips. Slouch. Feel how your hips roll back (if you're wearing jeans, you'll be sitting on your pockets). Now sit up straight by moving your pelvis forward and centering your weight over your pelvis and off your buttocks.

Sleep on Your Back or Side.

Sleeping on your stomach makes you twist your neck and body in order to breathe. This twisted position is terrible for your spine, especially for prolonged periods during sleep. Check your pillow and make sure it has a thickness that will support your neck in a position neutral to the rest of your spine. Try a



Even just a few minutes at work can help turn bad habits into good ones.

Don't Slouch.

Slouching puts strain on your neck and can give you a headache. Your head weighs roughly 10 pounds-about as much as a bowling ball. Your spine is designed to balance that bowling ball when you're in an upright posture. If you slouch, your muscles have to do more work to hold your head up, which makes your muscles tight and angry.

memory-foam contour pillow, especially if you are a side sleeper.

Bend with a Straight Spine.

Bending over with a curved back puts pressure on your disc material and strains the spine. The pressure created during incorrect bending can cause the

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The miracle isn't that I finished. The miracle is that I had the courage to start.

-John Bingham

Office Hours and Contact

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discs to bulge and put pressure on spinal nerves. Your back was not made to lower and raise your body—that's what your buttocks, hips, and knees are for.

Stand with your knees shoulder-width apart and pretend you are going to lift a 50-pound box off the floor. If you are bending your knees and hips and using your legs to lower and raise your body weight, you are lifting correctly. Now, use the same technique to pick your shoes up off the floor. Think about a squatting movement when you need to lean forward, too—such as while washing your face in the sink. Let your hips and knees do the work.

Take Regular Stretch Breaks.

The muscles in your arms and hands get tight when you grip or pull. The muscles in your neck and shoulders get tight when you reach forward or away from your body. Give these muscles a break with a simple stretch.

It only takes 10 seconds to lengthen the tight tissue, which will take pressure off your joints and prevent chronic conditions like tendinitis and bursitis. Watch for opportunities to work in a brief stretch.

Undo Yourself.

Evaluate the position of your body during your daily activities and make sure you "undo" that position during the day. There is no way to teach a stretch for every single activity you do, but if you take the time to reverse the position of the joint and stretch in the opposite direction, you will lengthen tight tissue and reduce repetitive strain on joints.

Tips to Save Your Body

Replacing bad habits with good ones takes time and thought, but the effort is well worth it. Here are some helpful tips to keep you on track.

-- If you keep waking up on your stomach, wear a pair of gym shorts to bed and put a golf ball in each pocket. When you roll onto your stomach, the golf balls will wake you up and you can return to your back or side.

-- When unloading the dishwasher and getting laundry out of the machine, pose

like a tennis player waiting for a serve. The knees are over your toes (but not beyond the toes), buttocks are backward, and shoulders are forward.

-- Don't try to carve out 30 minutes daily for a stretching routine. If you stretch regularly throughout the day, you will be more effective at keeping tissue loose. Remember, it only takes 10 seconds to stretch a muscle—so find those seconds during your day and make the most of them.

-- Think about stretching the same way you think about hydration. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink water; by then you're already dehydrated. If you wait until something hurts before you stretch, you could develop chronic tension that can lead to everything from a headache to tendinitis.

A daily stretching routine will help

prevent future issues and address current ones. Don't wait until it's a problem. Start stretching today and, little by little, your body will thank you.

Kelli Crosby is the author of How to Think Like a Physical Therapist in Your Everyday Life. She graduated in 1999 from the University of North Florida and completed her specialty certification in orthopedic manipulative therapy in 2006.



Stretching for 10 seconds can take pressure off your joints and help relieve pain.

What is Hot Stone Massage?

Jed Heneberry

Stone massage is a luxurious experience in which the massage therapist uses warmed, smooth stones to provide bodywork, warming muscle tissue to reduce muscle tension and stiffness, and eliciting physical healing, mental relaxation, and a spiritual connection to earth energy

Photos frequently incorrectly portray the treatment with massage clients relaxing on a towel with stones placed artfully along their naked spines.

In reality, two insulating layers, a sheet and a thick bath towel, will be placed on your skin, and the stones will be placed upon it. Your massage therapist will be using stones heated to 130-140 degrees Fahrenheit. Stones should never rest directly on your skin; they will only touch your skin if the therapist is holding them to apply strokes.

Should I Get One?

The heat of stone massage can be

especially beneficial for certain populations and something to avoid for others. Specific chronic muscular conditions like frozen shoulder or low-back pain benefit as the heat helps tissues relax during massage work. And, while stone massage is lauded for the relaxation it promotes, therapists can use it for targeted trigger-point work and myofascial release as well.

Those who should avoid hot stone massage include people with diabetes, neuropathy, rheumatoid arthritis, skin conditions covering large areas of the body, or local skin conditions such as sunburn, broken skin, localized swelling, or other soft-tissue injuries.

Following are some of the benefits associated with stone therapies:

- oReduces anxiety, pain, and stress.
- oPromotes mental and physical relaxation.
- oCreates a feeling of groundedness and balance.
- oEnhances connection to earth energy.

oPromotes local circulation in the area where it is applied.

oWarms soft-tissue structures so they are ready for firm work more quickly.



Heated stones can provide a wealth of benefits

Try This Breathing Exercise

Anne Williams

Do you ever find yourself unconsciously holding your breath when you're tense? This can cause tension to build in your body and may let the chest collapse, leading to misalignment.

Proper breathing provides oxygen to the muscles and body, helps you stay relaxed and centered, and even helps you maintain correct body alignment throughout your day.

You can also use breathwork as part of a stress-reduction program by following this progressive relaxation exercise.

1. Begin by lying in a comfortable position without crossing your arms or legs, and focus on your breathing to create a slow, deep pattern. Inhale through your nose while counting to 10 and expanding your abdomen. Hold the breath for one second, and exhale

through your nose on the count of 10. Inhale and exhale in this pattern five times.

2. Beginning with your head, tense your facial muscles as tightly as possible and count to five. Release the muscles completely, and sense the muscles feeling heavy and still. Work down your entire body, tensing muscle groups and then relaxing them. After the head, move to the neck, chest, arms and hands, abdomen, back, thighs and gluteals, lower legs, and feet.

3. After relaxing each set of muscles, mentally scan your body for any areas of remaining tension and ask those areas to relax completely.

4. Repeat the slow breathing exercise.

5. Gently begin to move your body to come out of the deeply relaxed state.

Try using progressive relaxation directly

before or after your sessions, directly before bed, or at any time during the day as a pick-me-up. Focus on taking full, deep, even, rhythmic breaths. With a little practice, you can become more aware of your own breathing patterns and use breathwork effectively as you move throughout your day.

*Go into the
world and do
well. But, more
importantly, go
into the world
and do good.*

-Minor Myers, Jr.

Dear clients and friends,
Happy Spring! I hope the year is off to a great start for each of you, and your spring sports/adventures are going well. Whether you are charging ahead, or just making it through--massage can help keep you going. My massage table is always warm for your session (this is the most consistently commented on aspect of my office!), and I look forward to melting away pains and soreness, and restoring you for what is next.

Recently, I had a client exclaim 'Diana, you are extraordinary, that massage was life-changing!' This is the reason my practice is called Back to Center, because that's my goal for every treatment.

I hope to see you on the table soon!

Warmest regards,

Diana

For more regular contact: fb.com/backtocentermassage

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