



KEY WEAK MUSCLES AND TIGHT MUSCLES CAN CAUSE AN UNNATURAL OVERLOAD TO A JOINT. AND EVEN A NERVE THAT IS COMPROMISED CAN CREATE AN IMBALANCE THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO CHANGES IN JOINT FORCES.

PHYSIOTHERAPY CAN HELP IN THE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF OSTEOARTHRITIS

Osteoarthritis (OA) is one of the most common chronic health conditions and a leading cause of pain and disability among adults.

Osteoarthritis is the process of degradation of the cartilage covering the bones that form the joint surface and this deterioration can even progress to the breakdown of the underlying bone surfaces themselves.

Two of the most common joints affected are the knee and the hip joints. Studies vary in the estimate of the prevalence of this condition, but it is agreed that it is very common. It is estimated that from 7 to 28 percent of persons over 50 years old suffer from OA of the knee and/or hip. The common symptoms from OA are pain and stiffness in the affected joint. The pain and stiffness can range from being very mild to being totally debilitating.

There are predisposing factors to developing OA that one is unable to change. For example gender (female), increasing age and family history. But there are several physical factors contributing to OA that one can influence. These factors include a variety of issues that cause unfavourable mechanical/physical stress to the joint. Physiotherapists can help you to identify these risks and to treat them so they do not contribute to joint degeneration. Controlling these issues may prevent your name being on the long list waiting for a hip or knee replacement.

Unfavourable mechanical joint stress can be caused by previous injury of the involved joint or even of another joint. Weak muscles, tight muscles, pain locally or elsewhere, stiff or unstable joints, excess weight and other factors can change the loads and shear placed on a joint and can lead to early degeneration of those improperly loaded joint surfaces. Physiotherapists can guide you in your recovery following an injury to ensure that you restore your muscle and joint function to its best capacity and thereby reduce harmful loading of joints. Sometimes, unfavourable mechanical joint stress happens even without injury. Poor posture and muscle imbalance from repetitive challenging positions (eg playing catcher) or one-sided activities (eg playing tennis) can overload a joint over time. Physiotherapists can identify these imbalances and advise you on corrective exercises or postures.

Key weak muscles and tight muscles can cause an unnatural overload to a joint. And even a nerve that is compromised can create an imbalance that can contribute to changes in joint forces. A physiotherapist will help you identify these factors when you complain of joint pain.

OA is often referred to as a condition of wear and tear. That makes one

think that activity will contribute to the condition. In fact, only very high intensity and very repetitive activity is shown to be a causative factor. For a variety of reasons regular daily activity actually helps to prevent and manage OA.

Repetitive, abnormal joint strain can load a joint to the point it starts to cause tissue breakdown. Physiotherapists can advise you on less stressful postures at home and at work. And a physiotherapist can teach you alternate ways to perform activities to place less of a load on your joints.

It is true that OA cannot always be prevented. If you do have a painful and stiff joint, a physiotherapist can help to assess and manage the condition. Physiotherapists are trained in manual therapy techniques and soft tissue techniques that help to restore joint mobility and improve joint biomechanics. Physiotherapists can also use acupuncture, electrical stimulation, ultrasound or laser to help reduce pain and promote healing. And physiotherapists can teach you joint-saving techniques and proper strengthening and stretching exercises to help maintain your joint health as long as possible (which may or may not be your entire life).

Sadly, even if one is diligent in trying to prevent, slow progression and manage OA, not all joint replacements can be avoided. If you suffer from debilitating degeneration and a joint replacement is the best option for you, then a physiotherapist can direct you in your post-operative recovery to achieve a strong, flexible and functional joint that gets you moving once again!

So if you are concerned about getting OA, or concerned that you have OA, is it worth a visit to a physiotherapist? Absolutely it is. Physiotherapists are specifically trained to identify physical inadequacies and treat them with therapeutic techniques. Physiotherapy has helped a lot of people who thought they were destined to have a life time of pain and reduced activity.

Cathy Christie is a physiotherapist at Doug Christie Physiotherapy and Associates. You can find Cathy and other great physiotherapists in the Find a Physiotherapist section of our website at mbphysio.org



QUICK TIPS FOR PREVENTING OA AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF OA

- rehabilitate your injuries at the time in which they occur throughout your life
- stretch muscles and joints at least once a week, more often if they are tight
- keep active (walking is great for this)
- seek help from a physiotherapist for joint pain and stiffness that does not resolve quickly

**Have you got pain?
Is moving a challenge?
WE CAN HELP!**

Call us if you suffer from:

- Neck pain
- Back pain
- Arthritis
- Workplace / Car accident
- Concussion
- Rotator Cuff injury
- Post operative issues

Our physiotherapists have over 100 years of combined experience and have advanced training in treating muscle and joint dysfunction, vertigo and more.

INTERESTED IN ATTENDING A FREE “EXERCISE & ADVICE FOR EARLY HIP OSTEOARTHRITIS” SESSION? CALL US NOW!

**400 Tache Ave. (LL1) - Winnipeg MB
204-233-0419
dcphysio@mymts.net
dougchristiephysiotherapy.com**

EastCity Physiotherapy
1123 St. Mary’s Rd., Winnipeg, MB R2M 3T7
Office 204.691.1529 **Fax** 204.691.1749
Email info@eastcityphysio.ca

A Hand to Shoulder Clinic

Our Physiotherapists are Certified Hand Therapists offering:

- Custom Splinting
- Acupuncture
- Detailed assessments
- Comprehensive treatments