

When Exercise is Medicine

Knowing the Appropriate Dose!

Exercise can be
medicine for almost
anything that ails you

Recently described as the closest thing to a miracle drug, exercise can be medicine for almost anything that ails you. In fact, clinical research has consistently demonstrated that a graded exercise program is the single best treatment strategy for a multitude of physical ailments, including but not limited to low back pain, knee osteoarthritis, stroke recovery, concussion recovery, recovery from cancer and so much more. But just as a specific medication must be prescribed for a specific illness, and in a particular dosage, tailored to an individual's medical diagnosis, physical stature, age, health history and so on, prescribing exercise as a therapeutic strategy involves a bit more precision than a one-size-fits-all approach too.

For example, there is no such thing as a universal exercise program guaranteed to benefit everyone suffering from low back pain. To broadly prescribe exercise such as yoga, pilates, hip stretching or core strengthening without first conducting a thorough assessment would be well-intentioned, but potentially misguided. Each method of exercise involves a multitude of possible exercises, some of which may be contraindicated for the particular patient or for that moment in a patient's journey towards wellness.

Therapeutic exercise that correlates specifically to an individual's unique history, current life circumstances taking into account work related postures, hobbies, physical inter-

ests and so on as well as findings from a thorough clinical exam — which includes movement patterns and aggravating positions — is safer and dramatically more effective as a rehabilitation intervention than a generic recommendation.

This is where experts who are trained at assessing movement dysfunction and strength imbalances can provide knowledgeable guidance. Physiotherapists are and have been providing graded exercise prescriptions for patients with a multitude of diagnoses — and clinical presentations — since the profession was first introduced into the world of physical rehabilitation.

As a physiotherapist who believes in and practices modified yoga and clinical pilates as exercise intervention strategies, I am often asked by potential clients as well as acquaintances whether or not they should do yoga or maybe even pilates. Over the past few years, and with increased popularity in the two forms of movement, my response has become somewhat tongue-in-cheek.

“That’s a bit like asking me if you should eat.” I kid. “Yes you should definitely eat. Everyone needs sustenance, but the options and the assortment of what you might eat are enormous.” I strongly believe the beauty and benefits of yoga and pilates lie in the mind-body-breath connection, which is foundational and universal to both. Anyone who experiences chronic pain or who struggles with

movement can benefit from connecting the mind, body and breath - no matter their entry point. Actually, everyone can practice yoga or pilates even if you are limited to a wheelchair or have severely compromised movement. But knowing the right poses and exercises for you is where a physiotherapist will provide value. And, for those who are in pain or are not physically functioning optimally but are still able to move a fair bit, there is a massive repertoire of poses and possible exercises to choose from.

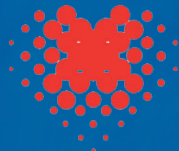
The obvious solution to physical health is to just keep moving; which type of exercise and how much is where advice from a physiotherapist is key. To find out how you can heal your mind and body, speak with one today.

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