

PREVENTING NECK PAIN

Here is some useful advice to help you control and prevent neck pain:



POSTURE

Think tall: chest lifted, shoulders relaxed, chin tucked in and head level. Your neck should feel strong, straight and relaxed.

SLEEPING

A down pillow or a urethane pillow is best for most people. Avoid sleeping on your stomach. Your physiotherapist will assess and advise you.

RELAXATION

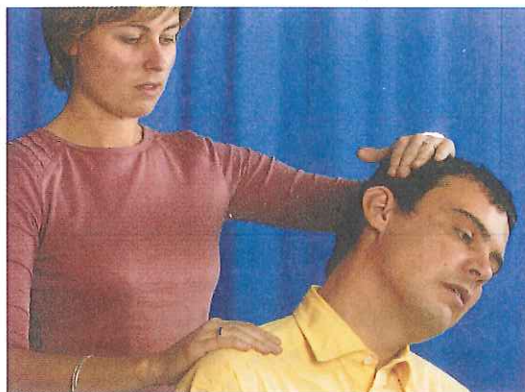
Recognise when you are tense. You may be hunching your shoulders or clenching your teeth without realising it.

WORK

Avoid working with your head down or to one side for long periods. Frequently stretch and change position. Your physiotherapist will show you how.

EXERCISE

Keep your neck joints and muscles flexible and strong with the correct neck exercises. Your physiotherapist will assess for tight or weak muscles and show you specific exercises to treat your situation.



HOW PHYSIOTHERAPY CAN HELP

Physiotherapists will be able to determine the source of your neck pain and treat it. They may use:

- Mobilisation.
- Manipulation.
- Functional and Rehabilitative exercises.
- Encouraging normal activity.
- Postural assessment, correction and advice.
- Relaxation therapy.
- Laser, ultrasound, electrotherapy and heat treatment.
- Massage.

Manipulation can be an effective treatment for neck problems, but it may not be the best option in every situation. After a full examination your physiotherapist will discuss treatment options with you. Your physiotherapist will carefully check your neck before manipulating it to see if other methods, such as mobilisation, would be preferable.

Your physiotherapist can also offer you self-help advice on ways to correct the cause of neck pain, such as practical ergonomic tips for work and in the home, adjusting furniture, relaxation and exercise.

GENERAL

Many physiotherapists in private practice are listed in the Yellow Pages. Physiotherapists also work in public hospitals and community health centres. Check to see if a physiotherapist is a member of the APA. Members of the APA are bound by a professional Code of Ethics and have access to extensive and continuing postgraduate education programmes.

HEALTH REBATES

You may consult a physiotherapist either directly or by referral from your medical practitioner. Most private health insurance funds offer rebates for physiotherapy treatment.

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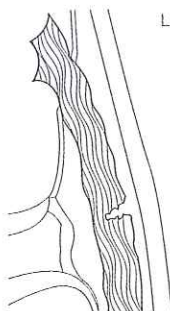
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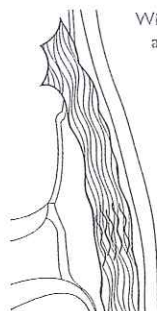
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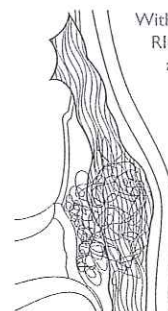
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Ligament immediately after injury.



With early physiotherapy and RICE, scar tissue is healthy and recovery is quicker.



Without physiotherapy and RICE, and with too much activity too soon, bulky painful scar tissue and delayed recovery may result.

HOW PHYSIOTHERAPY CAN HELP

- Your Physiotherapist will examine the injured ankle to determine which ligaments are damaged and to what extent they are torn, and can order an X-ray if needed.
- Early treatment will reduce the swelling and pain, making it easier to walk. Even one treatment and advice can make a significant difference.
- Special techniques called mobilisation help to increase your range of ankle movement so that it is easier to walk and move the ankle. Mobilising the ankle also helps to build a healthy scar in the ligament.
- Your Physiotherapist will show you exercises that are important to improve the strength of the calf and ankle muscles to compensate for the damaged ligament, and give some protection while the ligament is healing.
- Your Physiotherapist will also teach you how to retrain your muscles to react quickly to changes in ankle position to prevent repetitive sprains.

WHEN TO RETURN TO WORK/SPORT

- Your Physiotherapist will discuss the injury with you and estimate the time it will take to recover. The time to full recovery varies from a few weeks to a few months, depending on the severity of ligament damage. Remember that the pain and swelling subsides much faster than the time it takes for the ligament and muscles to regain normal strength. Returning to work or sport too early can delay healing and prolong recovery.
- Your Physiotherapist can teach you how to do special ankle taping or fit you with an ankle brace so that you can return to activity earlier, while protecting the ankle from further damage.
- Your Physiotherapist can help you plan ways to do alternative training so that you maintain fitness and muscle strength while your ankle is healing.

CAN ANKLE SPRAINS BE PREVENTED?

You can reduce the chance and severity of ankle sprains.

- Wear activity-specific well-fitting shoes, use sports strapping tape or an ankle brace to provide good ankle joint support.
- Avoid activities on slippery or uneven surfaces and in areas with poor lighting.
- Keep your leg muscles strong, especially your calf and ankle muscles to help protect the ligaments.

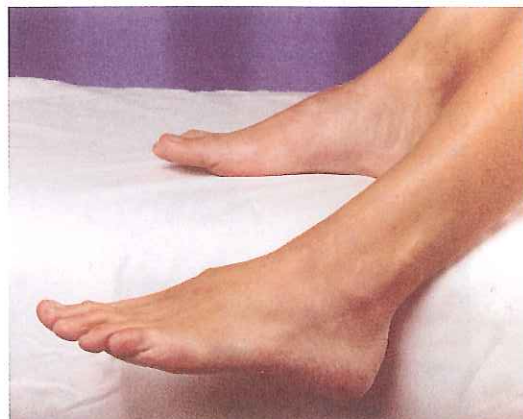
- Practice standing on one leg to challenge your balance responses and the muscles around your ankle.
- Prepare your body for activity by warming up well.

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CAN KNEE INJURIES BE PREVENTED?

You may reduce the chance and severity of knee injuries:

- Warm-up and warm-down before and after exercise.
- Build up your exercise program by gradually increasing the frequency, duration and intensity, but don't work through pain.
- Maintain good general fitness and lower body strength and flexibility (especially calf, quadricep and hamstring).
- Practise standing on one leg to improve your balance and leg muscle strength.
- Skiers – get a qualified ski technician to check your binding settings (bindings must be set to weight and skill level).

WHEN TO RETURN TO WORK/SPORT

Your Physiotherapist will discuss the injury with you and estimate the time it will take to recover. This will vary from weeks to months, depending on the severity of the injury. The pain and swelling associated with an acute injury subside much faster than the time it takes for the ligament and muscles to regain normal strength. Returning to work or sport too early may delay healing and prolong recovery.

Your Physiotherapist can teach you how to tape your knee, or fit you with a knee brace if required. Your Physiotherapist can help you to plan alternative ways to maintain your fitness and muscle strength while you are recovering from your knee injury.

WHAT TO DO AFTER A SPRAIN

As soon as possible, and for 72 hours after injury, use the **RICE** method:

- Rest** Take it easy and only move within your limit of pain.
- Ice** As soon as possible, and for 20 minutes every two hours, apply ice or a frozen gel pack wrapped in a damp towel. This helps to control bleeding and pain and reduces secondary tissue damage.
- Compression** Firmly bandage the knee and include 5 cm above and below the joint. This helps to control swelling.
- Elevation** As much as possible, elevate your leg higher than the level of your heart to reduce swelling.

HOW PHYSIOTHERAPY CAN HELP

Your Physiotherapist will examine your knee to determine the type, extent and causes of your injury, and can order an X-ray or refer you to a doctor if needed. Early treatment will reduce any pain or swelling.

Special techniques called mobilisation may help to increase the movement of your knee joint (if required), improving your recovery. Your Physiotherapist will teach you exercises to improve the strength of the knee and other lower leg muscles to enhance your recovery and help prevent further injuries.

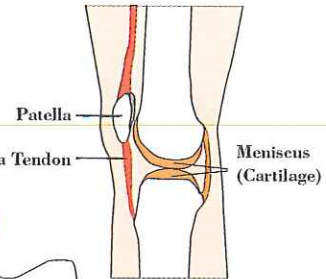
REHABILITATE

Recovery can start very early after an injury. Physiotherapy rehabilitation techniques will help reduce the time that your knee is painful and movement is restricted so that you can get back to work and sport more quickly. Rehabilitation also facilitates a good quality ligament repair and the return of normal muscle and nerve function.

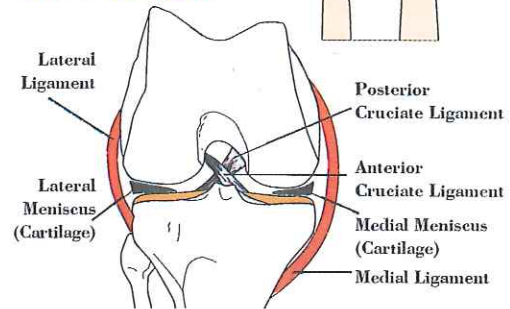
Avoid any of the **HARM** factors in the first 48 hours to prevent increased swelling and help your recovery. The **HARM** factors are:

Heat, **A**lcohol, **R**unning, **M**assage.

Side view of knee
(Cross section)



Front view of knee
Meniscus (Cartilage)



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HOW YOUR BACK WORKS

Your back is a complex system of interlocking components:

- Vertebrae are the bones that make up the spinal column.
- Discs separate the vertebrae and act as shock absorbers.
- Facet joints between the vertebrae guide spinal movement.
- Ligaments hold the vertebrae together.
- Muscles are attached to the bones. They control and produce movement.



TIPS TO HELP YOU MOVE WELL AND STAY WELL

Here is some useful advice to help you prevent back pain:

LIFTING

With your feet shoulder-width apart, bend at the hips and knees. Grip the load firmly and hold it close to your body, tighten your stomach muscles and use the strong muscles of your legs to lift. Keep your back as straight as possible, and gently breathe out. Avoid twisting - turn by using your feet, not your back.

STANDING POSTURE

Think tall: chest lifted, shoulders relaxed, chin tucked in and head level. Posture should be stable, balanced and relaxed, when sitting, walking or standing.

SITTING

Don't stay seated for too long, ideally no more than 20 minutes. Stand up, stretch and walk around. The right back support will also help. Also ensure that your workstation and computer are correctly positioned.

EXERCISE

Stay in shape - healthy body-weight is less strain on your back. Your Physiotherapist can show you how to keep your back flexible and strong with correct back and abdominal exercises.

DRIVING

Good support from your car seat will prevent back pain. If you need more lower back support, use a lumbar roll or a rolled-up towel.

SLEEPING

Your mattress should be firm enough to support your natural shape.

HOW PHYSIOTHERAPY CAN HELP

Almost all Australian doctors refer patients with back pain to Physiotherapists in preference to other health practitioners. Depending upon the cause and type of pain, Physiotherapists treat back pain in a variety of ways:

- Advice and early activity (recent research indicates that one of the most important treatments for low back pain is movement).
- Mobilisation/ manipulative physiotherapy.
- McKenzie therapy.
- Specific stabilisation exercises.
- General exercises and stretches.
- Ergonomic advice.
- Postural advice.

APA Musculoskeletal Physiotherapists have post-graduate training in the management of musculoskeletal disorders and have more ways to help your back move well and stay well. Research has proven that specific stabilisation exercises are an effective treatment for low back pain. Physiotherapist's are the only group of professionals appropriately qualified and educated to instruct in these exercises.

Ongoing 'maintenance treatments' should not be required once your back has been successfully treated by a Physiotherapist. Your physiotherapist will encourage self-management through specific exercise prescription. If severe pain persists, other causes will need to be investigated. Your Physiotherapist can order x-rays or recommend that you see a doctor.

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