

'Body Talk'

BACK CARE for the NEW YEAR

Discs & Ligaments

The spine has unusual challenges, needing to be both flexible and strong. The flexibility is in all three planes and the loads exceptional for such a flexible structure, especially in the lower (Lumbar) spine. The design allowing us this function: Building blocks (Vertebra) aligned on top of each other with a shock absorbing cushion (Disc) between each. These are all kept together with the help of many supporting ligaments and muscles, which also provide strength and control of movement.

Towers of Strength

If you remember building towers with blocks as a child (or with a child) the mechanics are similar. If the blocks are stacked carefully directly above each other then there is greater strength, but if they are mal-aligned the tower will fall with little disturbance. Fortunately for us we have the ligaments and muscles as support but Low Back Pain affects 80% of people during their working life so care is needed. Research is showing that 70-80% of LBP in 25 – 65 year olds is Disc related. This is because the discs are the most flexible structure while taking significant loads. Each disc has a firm outer layer, a soft centre and a nerve leaving the spinal cord to various parts of the body passing close by, one on each side.



Low Back Pain, as I am sure many of you already know, does not only arrive in the event of a sudden incident, for the majority it starts for "no apparent reason". Accumulative stresses are the culprit again ... they seem to come up a lot in my articles! If repeated movements or sustained postures are done in a way that puts load through a bent spine a weakness can eventually develop in the outside of the discs. Eventually the soft centre will bulge causing pain. If this stress continues or increases the bulge may become a prolapse or hernia often pressing on the nerve or spinal cord. By this time you have pain radiating into your leg or foot with possible numbness and loss of strength.

HELP?

- **Recognise the early warnings** – if you experience an aching low back on getting out of a car or rising from a chair or bed your back is warning you. Sitting for long periods with your back in the 'banana shape' position is the biggest culprit followed by habitually bending your spine instead of your legs when leaning forward. Lifting heavy objects in this way will further increase chances of injury.
- **Change habits** - work at keeping your back straight when lifting and sitting. Making sure your back and abdominal (core) muscles are strong is helpful but only if you have trained your body to actually use them correctly in these situations.
- **Seek help** – if your pain persists or you are not sure how to change what you are doing call me for an assessment, advice and an exercise program. If you need massage or mobilisation I can also do that but the initial focus will be for you to learn how you can help yourself in order to prevent a recurring condition. My assessment will show on the first or second visit whether it is a 'treat yourself' problem or further assistance is required.
- **Pain medications** – these have a place but will seldom cure back pain, often only 'covering up' the problem. If you are not able to sleep because of pain they are helpful but during the day you need to be alert to what activities are making it worse or better. You can then learn to make changes accordingly. When coming for a physio assessment it is more effective without pain medications in your system if possible.
- **Doctor, X-Ray MRI etc?** – If you have had a history of significant trauma, if your symptoms are constant and worsening or not shifting from your leg despite treatment and posture changes then you need to see a doctor who will then decide if investigations offshore are indicated.

Thorough assessment is my focus and then working with you on a plan for treatment which involves you doing as much for yourself as possible. For an appointment give me a call on 742 0046.

Physiotherapy Timor is now located close to the ANZ Bank in Rua Belarmino Lobo. We are delighted to occupy a room alongside **Kafé Aroma** which provides you with the opportunity to combine a visit to Physio with lunch or coffee.



Gill Cammel - Physiotherapist

RANDOM FACT TRIVIA

Fact: Greek Olives

Greece devotes 60 percent of its cultivated land to olive-growing. It is the world's top producer of black olives and boasts more varieties of olives than any other country. Greece holds third place in world olive production with more than 132 million trees, which produce approximately 350,000 tons of olive oil annually, of which 75 percent is extra-virgin. This makes Greece the world's biggest producer of extra-virgin olive oil, topping Italy (where 40-45 percent of olive oil produced is extra virgin) or Spain (where 25-30 percent of olive oil produced is extra virgin).

Fact: Black Pepper

Peppercorns are, by monetary value, the most widely traded spice in the world, accounting for 20 percent of all spice imports in 2002. The price of pepper can be volatile, and this figure fluctuates a great deal year to year; for example, pepper made up 39 percent of all spice imports in 1998. By weight, slightly more chile peppers are traded worldwide than peppercorns.

Fact: Eating With A Fork

The fork as an eating utensil was introduced in the Middle East before the year 1000. First introduced to Europe in the 10th century by Theophanu, Byzantine wife of Emperor Otto II, the table fork had, by the 11th century made its way to Italy. The fork's arrival in northern Europe was more difficult. For many years it was viewed as an unmanly Italian affectation. The Roman Catholic Church expressly disapproved of its use: "God in his wisdom has provided man with natural forks — his fingers. Therefore it is an insult to Him to substitute artificial metallic forks for them when eating." It was not until the 18th century that the fork became commonly used in Great Britain.

Fact: Konjac & Money Counterfeiting

This validity of this fact is questionable...

Konjac is a plant that is grown in China, Japan and Korea for its large starchy seeds. The seeds are used to create a flour and jelly of the same name. It is also used as a vegan substitute for gelatin. In the late 1800s, Konjac powder was added to the first national currency of Japan to prevent counterfeiting, but it was stopped after rats began to eat the bills.

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From 'The Comedian's Quote Book

I don't think my parents liked me... my bathtub toys were a toaster and a blender.

Rodney Dangerfield

HEALTH

Restricted embryo growth 'predicts miscarriage risk'

The growth of an embryo during the early stages of pregnancy is linked to its risk of miscarriage, says a University of Nottingham study. Scientists found that 78% of single-baby pregnancies which ended in miscarriage were in the smallest 5% of embryos. Researchers measured the length of more than 500 single and twin embryos during the first trimester. An



expert said the study added to our knowledge of miscarriage risk. The research was presented at the British Fertility Society annual meeting in Leeds. The Nottingham researchers tracked the growth of 247 single and 264 twin embryos conceived through IVF, because this allowed them to know the embryos' precise gestational age. For each embryo, the distance from the top of the embryo's head to the bottom of its buttocks (the crown-rump length), was measured once during the first trimester using an ultrasound scan. The pregnancy was then monitored until birth. **Poor growth** Using the measurements, the researchers discovered that poor growth in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy was a good predictor of miscarriage. They calculated that 77.8% of single embryo pregnancies that miscarried were growth restricted, while 98.1% of single embryo pregnancies that did not miscarry were not growth restricted. This was not the case in twin pregnancies, however, where only 28.6% of pregnancies that miscarried were growth restricted. Ninety-eight per cent of twin pregnancies that did not miscarry were not growth restricted. Dr Shyamaly Sur, who led the research, said the findings should help to identify pregnancies at risk of miscarriage. "There are various reasons why some embryos show restricted growth in the early stages of pregnancy. It could be down to an abnormality in the foetus or something in the environment of the womb." **Underlying causes** "More research is now needed to investigate the relationship between growth and the underlying causes of miscarriage in more detail. "We are focusing on how blood flow to the womb lining and embryo quality influence conception rates and subsequent miscarriage." Dr Raj Mathur, consultant gynaecologist at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge, said it was a very good study which made biological sense. But he said there were other factors to consider when looking at miscarriage risk. "We also need to consider the woman's health history, look at the picture of the whole woman. "This study adds to our knowledge about risk but we also need to look at blood supply to the embryo and whatever genes are passed on from the father too." The study also found that twin embryos grew at the same rate as single embryos during the first trimester, which was not expected. "There is something else going on with twin embryos. We need more research in this area. It could be that twins grow normally and then miscarry." Dr Sur said the research seemed to suggest that embryo growth patterns were similar in non-IVF pregnancies. *BBC*