



MARCH 2015

The Relationship Between Pain and Your Brain

ESSENTIAL PHYSIOTHERAPY

For someone suffering from pain, to be told “It’s all in your head” can be a frustrating experience. What many people don’t understand is that pain is a complex process and the mind plays a role in the perception of pain for everyone.

All pain, no matter the cause, must be recognized by the brain and processed for you to be aware of it. Pain is actually an important part of human survival, letting you know which activities are dangerous and encouraging you to rest and in many cases to protect damaged tissue. When the body loses the ability to perceive pain, this can lead to further injury and even death.

There is a famous condition where people don’t feel any pain at all, known as “congenital analgesia”. This is actually a very dangerous condition and these people are at risk of dying young. They have no warning system letting them know that they need to seek treatment. It can be hard to get your head around the idea that pain helps you survive, but it really is an important strategy of our bodies to keep us protected.

Pain isn’t always associated with tissue damage.

Even though pain is an important part of human survival, sometimes things go wrong. A famous example of this is phantom limb pain, where amputees continue to have severe pain, sometimes for decades after the limb has been removed.

Sometimes pain can even be felt on the injured side when looking at a mirror image of their uninjured limb moving.

The amount of attention you give to pain and how you feel about it will also change how severely you experience that pain.

Have you ever noticed a bruise and couldn’t remember how you got it? That is an experience of tissue damage without much pain. On the flip side, if you have suffered recent emotional trauma or are grieving you might find a small injury very difficult to deal with. Some people believe the best way to deal with pain is to ignore it and push through with all activities. Other people believe that the best treatment for all pain is to rest and stop all activities.

What you believe about pain and how you react to it can have a big effect on how your brain interprets pain signals. Feeling in control of your pain is also very important. For people who are experiencing pain for long periods of time without any way to reduce symptoms this can be very distressing, particularly if this pain is impacting their ability to participate in activities.

Your physiotherapist is trained to help you deal with pain in the best way possible. This may involve counselling and education about how to deal with your pain and not just physical treatment of your injury. Don’t hesitate to ask us more next time you come in.

BRAIN TEASERS

1. Can you name four days which start with the letter “T”?
2. You are in a dark room with a candle, a wood stove and a gas lamp.

You only have one match, so what do you light first?

PhysioTip

Sore following vigorous exercise or playing sport? It is recommended that you do some light activity like a walk or swim when you experience muscle soreness. This together with stretching will help you to recover faster.



The Changing World

For a fascinating glimpse into how the world has changed since you have been alive the BBC have created an interactive page with some insights into the world around you. See information such as how many people have been born since you were, amongst other crazy facts.

Have a look here at www.bbc.com/earth/story/20141016-your-life-on-earth

Focus On...

High Ankle Sprains

WHAT IS A HIGH ANKLE SPRAIN?

The ankle consists of three bones, the tibia, fibula and talus, all held together by thick fibrous ligaments. At the bottom of the leg they form a mortise or hinge joint with the foot. The bottom parts of the tibia and fibula join together and surround the talus in such a way that it is able to hinge forwards and back while providing stability and restricting the side-to-side movements.

Syndesmosis describes the ligaments holding the tibia and fibula together and a high ankle sprain is a tear of these ligaments. A normal ankle sprain is a tear of the ligaments lower in the ankle, and this is why we refer to a syndesmosis tear as a "high" ankle sprain.

HOW DO THEY OCCUR?

These injuries usually occur through twisting of the ankle during sport, however they can also happen with day-to-day activities.

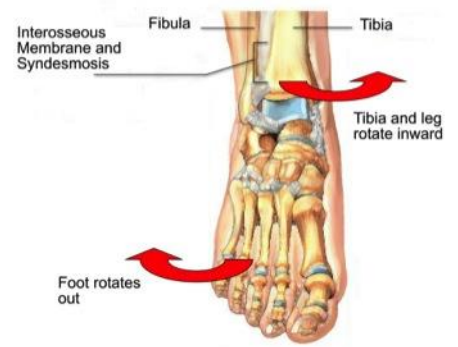
The foot is typically pushed back and rotated outwards, putting excess pressure on the ligaments keeping the lower leg bones together. This force can cause the syndesmosis to tear resulting in a gapping of the two bones, which can lead to significant instability of the ankle.

HOW CAN YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A NORMAL ANKLE SPRAIN AND A HIGH ONE?

High ankle sprains are much rarer than lower ankle sprains, accounting for only 1-11% of all ankle injuries. It can be very difficult to tell the two injuries apart. To complicate things, a fracture of the ankle will also have similar symptoms. Your physiotherapist will have a set of physical tests they can perform if they suspect a high ankle sprain. Ultimately imaging may be required to confirm the diagnosis.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

High ankle sprains can take up to two times longer to heal than normal ankle sprains and require more immediate attention. Syndesmosis tears that are left untreated can result in chronic instability and pain, making them vulnerable to further injury in the future.



WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?

Severe and unstable tears may require surgery and most syndesmosis tears will need to be put into a supportive boot for 4-6 weeks. Following this period a rehabilitation program of strengthening, mobilization, balance, control and agility will need to be commenced before your ankle will be at its pre-injury function. Cortisone injections may be recommended in some cases and have been shown to have good results, when accompanied with proper rehabilitation program. Speak to your physiotherapist for more information.

None of the information in this newsletter is a replacement for proper medical advice. Always see a medical professional for advice on your individual injury.

Answers: 1. Tuesday, Thursday, Today, Tomorrow. 2. You light the match



Chia Fresca

Makes 3 cups/750mls

Measure out 3 cups of water, preferably filtered. Add chia seeds, acai powder, lemon juice and maple syrup and stir to combine. Pour into a bottle. Place in the fridge and let sit for a couple of hours or overnight.

The chia seeds will expand with the liquid and turn gel-like. Shake before drinking.

Serve with lots of ice. Keeps for 3-5 days in the fridge.

Recipe from Green Kitchen Stories, for a how-to video go to www.greenkitchenstories.com chia-acai-fresca/

- 6 tbsp chia seeds
- 3 tsp dried acai powder or pomegranate, blueberry, wheatgrass, chlorella
- 3 tsp lemon juice
- 3 tsp maple syrup or raw honey
- 3 cups/ 750 ml filtered water



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Try this:

Trace this pattern on the left with a pencil in one continuous line without taking the pencil point off the paper. You are not allowed to cross the line, or go over any part of it twice.

