



# Bodywork & Exercise

## Increase Body Awareness While Increasing Your Activity

Ruth Werner

You have to give us credit: as a culture, Americans are incredibly interested in getting fit. We invest every year in new diets, exercise programs, and supplements for weight loss and improved energy. Low-range estimates suggest that Americans spend about \$2.6 billion each year on gym memberships alone.

We also tend to pitch full speed into any given commitment. If we're going to get fit, by golly, we're going to do it now, regardless of how long it took us to get into our current state. We don't do things by half measures, and moderation is not in our nature. So how do we keep ourselves injury-free while honoring our commitment to exercise and get healthy?

sports field seems to appeal to our competitive spirit--especially when we're surrounded by others who all seem to be doing better than we are. Combine this kind of human drive with poorly trained athletic trainers who give bad advice about form, pacing, and effort, and we have a recipe for potential problems.

Exercise is only effective when it occurs without injury. Any new exercise program requires some caution, even if it is comparatively easygoing. And more challenging programs are safest and most successful when new participants build up their activity levels carefully and receive excellent guidance about form.

### WHEN IT GOES WRONG

We accrue musculoskeletal and fascial

*It's all about finding the calm in the chaos*

-- Donna Karan



Moderation is key when beginning a new exercise program

### DOES IT HAVE TO BE ALL OR NOTHING?

We all know that starting an exercise program doesn't actually mean we'll finish it. When we throw ourselves into an ambitious new routine, we are likely to overdo it and get hurt. Then, we get discouraged, and may give up entirely, only to start the cycle over in another year or so.

Overdoing things in the gym or on the

injuries throughout our entire lifespans. In the best circumstances, they heal well, with a minimum of internal scar tissue, and function returns to practically normal levels. When things are ideal, that sprained ankle you got playing soccer at age 12 doesn't affect your ability to walk in your 30s. The lumbar

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### Office Hours and Contact

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**New office in Flagler coming soon!**

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strain you got from picking up the heavy laundry basket 15 years ago resolved well, so at 62, it won't hinder your golf game. We are able to adapt to minor injuries, and we learn how not to exacerbate them.

But when we introduce a new exercise program, especially if that exercise program is more demanding, or demanding in different ways than we have experienced before, we risk the flaring up of old injuries. Scar tissue does not have the weight-bearing capacity of healthy muscle or connective tissue. This is when that old sprained ankle may make itself known, and that weakness in your back will definitely have opinions about your new routine. Sometimes you might feel like your new commitment to fitness was not the best idea.

#### INJURIES CAN HAPPEN ANY TIME

CrossFit is one program that gets a lot of attention because of its reputation for being especially demanding. But any type of exercise can lead to injury if correct form is not observed. Zumba, Jazzercise, and other dance-like programs bring a risk of foot and leg injuries, including sprained ankles, plantar fasciitis, and stress fractures, because the risk for twisting at the knee is so high.

If you aren't paying close attention to your own limits, even yoga can be a source of soft-tissue injury: delayed soreness, problems at the neck and sacroiliac joints, or other injuries. One massage therapist reported seeing several injuries related to a prolonged yoga headstand, probably in a student who was not ready for this challenge.

#### HOW CAN MASSAGE HELP?

Massage can help you deal with pain or soreness from your exercise regimen and can also help shorten recovery periods so you can train more efficiently. Although massage therapists are not primary care providers, and cannot diagnose conditions or prescribe specific treatments, your therapist may be able to offer excellent advice for dealing with a fitness-related injury. He or she may also have suggestions about warm-ups, cool-downs, and postexercise stretching, or be able to point you to an appropriate coach or other professional for specific exercise needs and to help prevent future injury.

The incidence of exercise-related injury

has a lot to do with people not paying attention to their own needs. One of the many things massage therapy offers to people who want to become healthier and more fit is the chance to become more aware of your own body in a powerfully positive way. Increased body awareness and self-appreciation may be the best tools for helping you increase activity levels without hurting yourself. In this way, you can reach your goals with power and joy, rather than with pain and injury.

*Ruth Werner is a former massage therapist, a writer, and a continuing education provider. She wrote A Massage Therapist's Guide to Pathology (Lippincott Williams + Wilkins, 2013).*



Massage can get you back on track following an exercise-related injury

# Cultivating a Gardening Habit

## Discover the Health Benefits of Yard Work

Feeling the need to exercise, clean up your diet, meditate? Want to be more creative, get out and meet people, enjoy the outdoors, and slow down? There's one activity in which you can accomplish all of these objectives: gardening.

### ENCOURAGING EXERCISE

Studies show that vigorous digging burns 500 calories an hour, weeding burns 210 calories, and mowing the lawn burns 400 calories. As a moderate exercise, gardening has been found to decrease the risk of heart disease and diabetes, and a study at the University of Arkansas found that gardening was almost as effective as weight lifting in reducing the risk for osteoporosis in women. So instead of taking that indoor aerobics class this summer, try mowing the lawn or planting an herb garden.

As with any exercise regimen, the key is to start at a comfortable pace and gradually work your way up to longer, more difficult activities. Your heart rate should be about the same as when you

take a brisk walk.

### IMPROVING YOUR DIET

Gardening will also likely help you eat better. Research shows that people who grow gardens eat more vegetables and fruits than those who don't. Growing fresh herbs, even in a container on the deck or balcony, is another great way to add flavor and freshness to home-cooked meals and an incentive to try new recipes.

### BOOSTING YOUR SOCIAL LIFE

Gardening can also be quite social. Whether at a garden club, a community garden, or an online forum, people love to share ideas, solve common problems, and connect through mutual interests.

### EASING STRESS

And finally, gardening is a great way to manage stress. Spending time outside and tuning in to the rhythms of nature, we're reminded to be patient, slow down, and breathe the fresh air. Whether growing flowers, vegetables, or

herbs, a garden reminds us of our connection to life and the abundance that nature so freely gives.



**Gardening burns calories and improves diet.**

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# The Sunshine Vitamin

*Shelley Burns*

In the world of skin health, we focus on ways to improve skin quality. We work to prevent acne, cellular damage, dryness, and wrinkles. It is less common to discuss how a skin-care strategy may increase risk of developing other health conditions.

Skin cancer is one example. To prevent skin cancer, we protect ourselves with sunscreen--especially during the summer months. But by using sunscreen we are blocking the absorption of vitamin D, the "sunshine" vitamin.

Vitamin D is fat soluble and contains powerful antioxidant and anticarcinogenic properties that can prevent premature aging and cellular damage. Solid research indicates that vitamin D plays a role in reducing the risk of cancer, specifically breast, colon,

and prostate cancers. Vitamin D has been associated with preventing diabetes by reducing insulin sensitivity. It also improves heart health, reduces the risk of multiple sclerosis, strengthens bones, and decreases the effects of seasonal affective disorder.

Vitamin D can help resolve skin conditions like psoriasis, as it plays a role in skin cell regulation, including cell turnover and growth. Vitamin D can be effective in reducing the itching and flaking associated with this disorder. Ultraviolet B (UVB) treatments have long been used successfully in treating psoriasis because UVB produces vitamin D in the body.

Getting between 5-10 minutes of direct sun exposure daily on the arms, face, hands, and back (without sunscreen) can

provide enough vitamin D to meet your daily requirements, though sun exposure does present a risk. Because it is difficult to obtain enough vitamin D through food, many prefer to use supplements. Research on the health benefits of ingesting vitamin D led experts to advise an intake of 25-50 micrograms daily.

*Shelley Burns is a doctor of naturopathic medicine and completed studies at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine. She has certification in complementary and integrative medicine from Harvard University.*

*If we learn to  
open our hearts,  
anyone,  
including the  
people who  
drive us crazy,  
can be our  
teacher*

-- Pema Chodron

\*\*\*HarmoniHealing is excited to announce a tentative opening date of September 8, 2020! Please check my Facebook and/or Instagram page for updates!\*\*\*

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