



The benefits of movement

A patient's guide



Summary

Muscles work on a use it or lose it basis. Normal function depends on movement, regular exercise and physical activity.

This increases blood circulation around the body tissues. Without activity, the body will not work properly and is more prone to injury.

Remember, take control of the pain, don't let it control you.

Sources: NHS Live well website

More information

For up to date referral and service information please see our website.

Further advice including self management videos can be found on our website: www.whittington.nhs.uk/msk

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or

whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please contact us on 020 7288 3182. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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Introduction

If we are in pain, the temptation is to avoid everyday activity and movement, which might seem like the best thing to do. The problem is that this approach can lead to more inactivity and more pain as the tissues lose their ability to function correctly.

The soft tissues that surround our body such as muscles, ligaments and tendons need movement to keep them working well.

Avoiding movement for long periods of time causes these tissues to become stiff causing more pain.

Muscles that are not being used then quickly become weaker. Stiffer joints and weaker muscles put even more strain on the joints. Lack of movement and exercise can cause us to put on excess weight.

Other effects of muscle disuse could include problems with circulation, an unfit heart, premature aging, obesity or even depression. In other words, your body is at risk of becoming deconditioned.

The benefits of being active

A lot of us lead increasingly sedentary lives, and although we may seem busy, the amount of physical activity we do is often very limited.

Many of us spend a significant part of the day sitting for long periods of time. This is not good for your spine as it is designed for movement.

By becoming more active, you will achieve greater levels of fitness. The benefits include:

- Suppleness, by stretching tight soft tissues around joints
- Strength, muscles can then protect the joints
- Stamina, staying power to continue with everyday activities
- Weight control and
- Reduction in pain levels, gaining a feeling of well-being.

Working people require a daily activity level sufficient to meet the physical demands of their job, for example, travelling to and from work and doing the job itself. If you are unfit, the physical demands on your body will be higher and can increase your pain.

How to improve your fitness

There are a range of activities to improve fitness:

- Try to do some aerobic activity for at least a total of 150 minutes, spread out during a week, for example brisk walking, swimming or cycling.
- Follow advice on exercises given by your Physiotherapist.
- Try changing your position from sitting to standing regularly. The body likes to be moved on a regular basis.