



Hands On

Wadsworth Osteopaths ■ Newsletter ■ September 2014

This month's Theme: 'Back to school and back to work'



In this issue

- The weather continues to be pleasant even though the summer is over. Most of us have enjoyed our Summer break and are back to work and our children are back at school.
- In this edition of the newsletter we look at the problems of **sedentary activities**, with particular reference to children and teenagers. We also examine the problems associated with young spines while **carrying**.
- One particular condition which we come across in osteopathic practice is **Osteochondrosis** – a condition of the growing spine which rarely gives rise to symptoms in the active phase but can lead to back problems later on in life.
- **Pilates and Yoga** can be really helpful in counteracting the effects of a sedentary life. Read about Ava Munro, our new Yoga and Pilates teacher.
- And finally, catch up on news of our refurb at Holly House, hear about our apple crop and what you can enjoy in the **next edition**.

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Are you sitting comfortably?

The modern world has changed. It's a far cry from how our parents and grandparents lived. Manual work and physical exertion has been replaced for most of the population by a more sedentary lifestyle. Many people drive to work, sit at a desk, drive home and sit in the evening. Many children and teenagers pursue more sedentary pastimes with lap-tops, ipads, X Boxes, mobile phones and other wonderful devices tempting them to spend more and more time sitting.

Why is this a problem?

Our bodies are designed for movement. If we sit for too long our joints become stiffer, our muscles become weaker and our ligaments are put under strain. Long periods of sitting also affect our cardiovascular system – if we don't move the blood is not pumped around as well as it should be, and there is an increased risk of thrombosis, varicose veins and heart problems. Our digestive system also tends to stagnate if we do not move.

So, all in all, too much sitting is not good for us.

What can be done? Here are some top tips from our osteopaths.

The Osteopath comments:

1. **GET UP and MOVE.** Number one, and probably the most important thing, is to get up every so often. Ideally you should get up to stretch a little and move around every 20 minutes.
2. **DON'T SLOUCH.** Most of us tend to slouch when sitting, particularly on soft sofas. The bottom of the back should have a gentle arch to it. If it is allowed to sag, the ligaments of the spine are under strain. A cushion in the small of the back can help support the arch of the lumbar spine.
3. **GET CLOSE.** When sitting at a desk it is best to get close to the front of it. Arms on a chair can get in the way and force you to lean forward to your work or keyboard.
4. **CHOOSE A DECENT CHAIR.**
 - a. Not too saggy
 - b. Avoid sofas with a long seat (sadly, these days, many are too long so that when sitting with the back of your knees at the front of the seat there is too big a gap between your back and the back of the sofa). Sofas with a long seat encourage you to slump.
 - c. An office chair which is height adjustable is better than one of fixed height. Ideally with your feet flat on the floor your knees and hips should be at 90 degrees.
 - d. A chair with lumbar support (adjustable if possible) is better than one without.
5. **MOVE YOUR FEET.** Move your feet while sitting. Alternately raise and lower your heels so the calf muscle contracts and relaxes. This pumps the blood in your legs and reduces the risk of thrombosis.
6. **EXERCISE.** Take exercise. If you spend a lot of your time doing sedentary activities, make sure you timetable some physical activity into your day. A 20 minute walk each day is a good start. Swimming and cycling are also good. Pilates is helpful and don't forget dancing. It's great exercise. Find something that suits your physique and level of fitness. Most of all, make sure it's something you enjoy because you are much more likely to keep doing it!

Shouldering the Burden

Carrying bags is part of normal life, from handbags to rucksacks, from briefcases to suitcases - but start thinking about what you are carrying and how you carry it because it might just drag you down.

School children nowadays carry more than they used to do because many schools do not have sufficient locker space. Think about:

1. Even loading. One bag in each hand to balance up the load.
2. Rucksacks are great because the load is carried centrally and close to the spine reducing the work your muscles have to do. Use both straps to keep the load more even.
3. Think what you need for the day. Don't carry more than is necessary.

Handbags present pretty much the same issues:

1. Clear out your handbag frequently! Don't carry more than you need.
2. Even loading. Try not to carry on the same shoulder all the time.
3. Handbags with rucksack straps are great because the load is central.

Briefcases can also become ridiculously heavy. As the days and weeks go by, more and more stuff goes in and, before you know it, your case weighs a tonne! (Well, maybe not quite a tonne)

1. Sort out what you actually need and file the rest.
2. If you are a business traveller, get yourself a briefcase with wheels and a pulling handle – there are some very stylish ones available.
3. Think **paperless**. Many tasks can be done electronically, reducing the need to have so much printed material and reducing how much you have to carry. And while more sophisticated IT systems should reduce paper.....it doesn't always work in practice. However, it is still worth making the change.



Osteochondrosis – What's that?

While we are on the subject of Children and carrying it is worth mentioning the little know spinal condition – **Scheuermann's Disease** or **Spinal Osteochondrosis**.

1. While bones are growing, Osteochondrosis can develop at various sites in the body. In the spine it usually affects the lower part of the thoracic spine (between the shoulder blades) and the upper lumbar spine or lower back.
2. It is thought that Osteochondritis, which involves inflammation of the growing bone, is caused by extra loading on the spine. Poor posture (in particular slumping) probably contributes to the condition. Osteochondrosis is the resulting situation after the inflammation has died down.
3. The inflammation creates a softening of the bone tissue and a group of 3-4 vertebrae together become misshapen, with a wedging effect, which locally increases the forward curve of the spine (kyphosis).
4. This softening can also allow the discs to push into the top or bottom surfaces of the vertebrae creating characteristic Schmorl's nodes which show up on X-ray.
5. In the majority of cases Scheuermann's Disease does not cause symptoms and consequently often goes undiagnosed. Occasionally it can give rise to back pain. The main effect comes **later in life**:
 - o Because a group of vertebrae affected by osteochondrosis during teenage years are more curved forward than adjacent areas of the spine, this increases mechanical strain on the section above or below the osteochondrosis area.
 - o Also, typically, the flexed group in the osteochondrosis area is less flexible than the adjacent sections, so the neighbouring areas are placed under more mechanical strain.
 - o The increased curve and reduced flexibility can then mean that there is an increased susceptibility to ligament, muscle and, sometimes, disc injuries in these neighbouring areas in adult life.
 - o It is estimated that 25-30% of adults have signs of old spinal osteochondrosis.
6. **Plan of action.** For people who have osteochondrosis in their spine, there are several things that can be done to help:
 1. Arrange an examination. Get an assessment to see how it affects you and get some advice on treatment and home management.
 2. Maintaining flexibility is the most important factor. Exercise, particularly stretching and careful manipulation can help to improve flexibility.
 3. Keep muscles in good tone with a specifically designed exercise programme.
 4. Take care with posture, especially avoiding the slumped position when sitting.

Focus on.....

Pilates and Yoga Teacher Ava Munro joins the team at Holly House Clinic

Ava (some of you will know her as Jane Irving) will be running Pilates and Yoga (one-to-one and small group sessions) at Holly House Clinic from the beginning of October.

Ava tells her story:

"I've been teaching Yoga for nearly 6 years now. I used meditation successfully when I became anxious and stressed at work and the practice of Yoga seemed a natural progression from there. I knew that there was more to life than sitting behind a desk, so I decided to train as a yoga teacher. I needed to do something I loved and I wanted to inspire people to adopt Yoga into their life. I find it exhilarating and challenging and a truly wonderful experience all round and am keen to pass that feeling of well-being on to others.

Based in the East Riding of Yorkshire, Wave Yoga is accessible to everyone!

Fun and informative, I treat everyone as an individual, taking into account any ailments, disabilities, levels of experience and knowledge.

Wave Yoga and Pilates is a new approach to ancient knowledge and practice. Wave Yoga is about taking the spiritual and physical approach to holistic health into the new millennium.

I provide a caring, sharing and professional environment which is friendly, welcoming and relaxed.

I am a fully qualified Yoga teacher and run both Yoga and Pilates classes and individual sessions for beginners as well as people at intermediate and advanced level.

I will always take into account contra-indications and health problems, offering alternative positions to ensure you enjoy your Yoga or Pilates experience as much as possible.

I love what I do and I hope you will come to love Wave Yoga and Pilates (and your new body) too! I'm really looking forward to meeting you all."

If you would like to come along to a session, please contact Ava at Holly House Clinic. Tel: 01482 875004.

Holly House Clinic Refurbishment

A big thank you to Keith, Andy, Chris and Andy who helped with decorating, joinery, re-plastering, flooring and computer works at the end of August.

We very rarely close the clinic and, when we do, we try to keep closure to a minimum. So, with a very tight schedule our trusty team did an excellent job and got us up and running with the minimum of disruption.

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Apples

Last year we had a bumper crop of Bramley apples in the garden at the back of our Cottingham surgery. As usual we left a basket of apples in the waiting room so patients could help themselves. In fact we filled the basket 13 times! And thanks to your kind donations we raised just short of £200 for Dove House (our charity last year).

This year's crop is not looking so good (lots of tiny ones) but that's the way it goes – good years and bad years. So help yourself while they last and feel free to leave a donation to The Alzheimer's Society, our 2014 charity.

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Our October Edition

The October edition will have a Sporting Theme. Look out for out top tips for sportsmen and women.

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