

EVERYDAY Aches & Pains

Do you sometimes wake up feeling stiff and sore? After age 40, muscle and joint pain may become more frequent and recovery from strenuous activity is slower. The back, hips, knees and feet are especially vulnerable to strains, injury and arthritis.

Fortunately, treatment options for ongoing pain and disability from muscle and skeletal problems are advancing rapidly. Each year brings less invasive procedures, more tolerable pain relievers, and success with alternative therapies.

In addition, prevention of muscle and joint problems has now moved to center stage. Experts believe everyday aches and pains are less about aging and more about body mechanics – posture, lack of fitness, mental and physical tension, and lack of adequate rest.

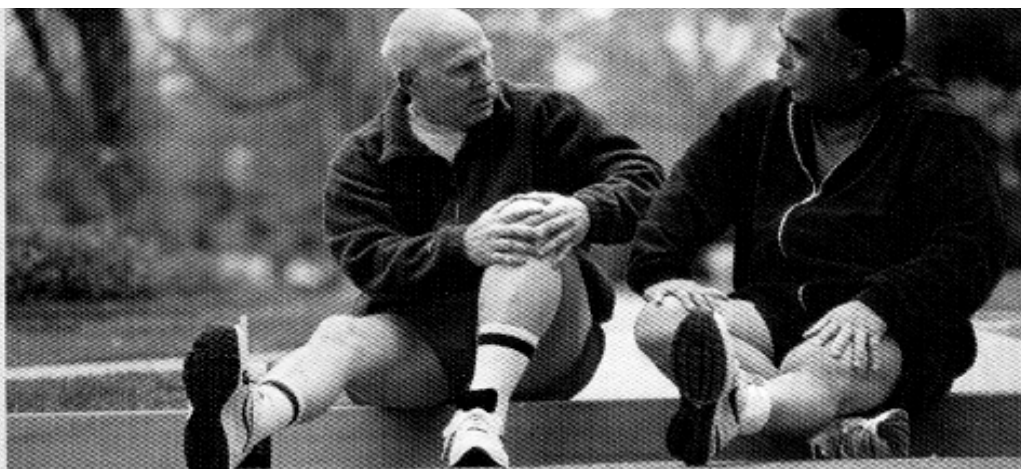
WHAT MAKES US ACHE?

LACK OF SLEEP After a long day of work, whether sitting, standing or on the go, the body becomes fatigued. And so do the muscles and joints, sometimes to the point of soreness. They need restorative sleep to recover.

STRESS When mental stress runs high, the body tenses and restricts blood flow to the muscles and nerves, especially through the upper body. Prolonged muscle tension can produce fatigue and even trigger back pain or headache.

POSTURE Sedentary activities, such as sitting at a computer or driving for long periods, can produce aches and stiffness in virtually every muscle group. Proper posture that maintains the natural curve of your spine can help reduce tension in the back, neck and shoulders.

INJURY Past injuries of the joints or muscles can produce recurring pain or create a permanent weakness. Because these areas may be subject to re-injury, take steps to ensure their full recovery and protection.



MUSCLES We tend to use the same muscles day after day for work, play and exercise. Meanwhile, other muscles may get little use and lose mass. Adequate muscle helps stabilize the joints and prevents strain and injury.

EXERCISE New exercisers often try to do too much too soon. Exceeding your body's ability to adapt to the increased physical demand can result in soreness or injury. Introduce increases in physical activity gradually.

WEIGHT Any excess weight you carry adds stress to your joints and increases the pain and risk of osteoarthritis. Reducing excess fat around your abdomen may reduce the strain and achiness in your lower back muscles.

Build strength and stamina with a muscle training routine 2-3 times a week. More muscle can help you perform both extraordinary and ordinary physical tasks without straining. Muscle also helps support your posture, which reduces fatigue, back pain and other body aches.

INSTANT TENSION RELIEF

When your muscles are calling for relief from work, play or sport, simple stretches can help ease the tension. **Examples:**

SEATED STRETCH

Lower your head and slowly curl your spine forward as shown. Feel the back muscles relax. Hold for 10 seconds. Unwind slowly, allowing the spine to gently uncurl. Repeat several times a day.



STANDING STRETCH

Stand with weight equally distributed, arms relaxed at your sides. Slowly curl your spine forward as shown for a gentle stretch. Hold for 10 seconds. Unwind slowly, allowing the spine to gently uncurl. Repeat several times a day.



Daily stretching for 10-15 minutes a day can increase flexibility and joint stability. This reduces the risk of injury – as well as those everyday aches and pains.