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healing process:

Inflammatory / **Proliferation** / Maturation (part 2 of 3)

The clean up and build up phase

Balancing the progressions of active healing

by Mark McFadden, Physiotherapist



You have suffered an injury...

Essentially, an injury usually pulls, rips, tears, frictions or pinches, to various degrees, at least one and usually more than one type of tissue. The inflammatory phase, which was presented in May's newsletter, is the body's protective reaction to prevent further injury and initial healing. The proliferation phase is where the majority of clean up and rebuilding takes place. When most people reach this second healing phase they are simply thrilled they are not experiencing sharp and intense aches and pains as they work and sleep and can, for the most part, carry out their daily activities. This is a critical stage, where the care provided has a major impact on the actual extent of recovery of healthy tissues.

After experiencing either an abrupt trauma or repetitive motion trauma the inflammatory phase evolves into the proliferation phase. There is no magic number of days or clear-cut distinction for the switch in phases, but to a great extent the speed at which you keep progressively healing is determined by how well you cared for the injury initially and your overall health.

The aim of proliferation is to clean up, build up and move on. The mess of damaged cells and tissues needs to be cleaned out by the body's natural healing process. Scar tissue is being laid, at the site of damage, where possible and existing cells and tissues are being built back up to pre-injury levels and more in order to compensate for the initial injury.

The clincher is the body needs help to do all this. The supportive actions of self care activities and health care provider assistance can facilitate this healing. Helpful hints are suggested in this article but knowing what exactly to do on your own can seem like a mystery. Seeking advice on proper application and techniques is wise as your injury is unique to you and knowing the best method to care for it is important for a successful healing phase.

ice – As the transition between phases occurs, there is often a remnant component of inflammation that ice helps minimize. Ice is also a very good counter stimulant against pain and to some degree muscle tension.

heat – Heat can facilitate blood and lymphatic cleaning out the effects of damage and swelling, and increase cellular activity, which is key to healing. Indeed, heat can help with relaxation of tissues that are taught or tense.

movement – Our body's are made to move. During proliferation regaining proper biomechanical motions are essential. Movements permitted do depend on the type of injury you had but in general you should be progressively moving up to and against pain barrier frequently enough and aggressive enough to regain lost motion. Gains become a balancing match between pushing your body toward recovery while not setting it back by being over zealous with movements.

strengthening – The tissues that have been injured are now a weak link in the chain. Muscles and their tendons that

were damaged or close to the injured area will be protectors for the area in the future. Rebuilding lost strength following injury and immobility is achieved through movements against resistance such as gravity, elastic therabands and objects with weight. How, how many and for how long are specifics about strengthening that will vary and progress as your strength builds. Be wise to avoid augmenting discomfort levels and over stressing and already fragile tissues.

stretching – Tissue flexibility in muscles/tendons, ligaments and capsules is needed in order to allow movement to occur. Following an injury tissues do tend toward excessive tension. Tissue flexibility can be improved through stretching which in most cases should be a slow, comfortable but strong stretch that gets held in place while trying to relax and does not require any wincing in discomfort as a result. Having balanced flexibility between muscles/tendons, ligaments and capsules will assist in the proper biomechanics of motions that occur at your joints.

Health care providers tuned into your specific needs are able to support you through this phase with self care guidance and specific therapeutic techniques and skills that will further fine tune this clean-up and build-up phase of healing.

Watch for the third article of this series, which will discuss the components of the Maturation phase of healing and the skill sets of balance, proprioception, dexterity, agility and dynamic kinetics which round out an overall successful recovery.

pilates for rehabilitation and prevention of injuries

by Taya van Waterschoot
Pilates / Yoga Instructor, Homeopathic Doctor



What do you get when you add a hospital bed, a couple of long springs, some nylon straps, and a man passionate about health and physical fitness? Believe it or not you have Pilates.

Inspired in many ways by yoga postures and breathing philosophies, Pilates was developed and refined by Joseph ("Joe") Pilates during the First World War. During the latter part of the war Joe served as an orderly in a hospital where he worked with patients unable to walk. Bedsprings attached to hospital beds allowed him to support patient's limbs while helping them to recuperate. Shortly after the war Joe moved to New York where his system of movement became more refined and was used by athletes and dancers at the peak of their physical fitness. Using both mat exercises as well as specially designed machines, this incredible form of movement is seeing a resurgence as both a means with which to help individuals recover from injuries and to help strengthen the body to prevent injury.

Physical fitness is the first requisite of happiness. In order to achieve happiness, it is imperative to gain mastery of your body. If at the age of 30 you are stiff and out of shape, you are old. If at 60 you are supple and strong then you are young.

Joseph Pilates

the core muscles

The Pilates system of movement pays special attention to the deep abdominal muscles and muscles closer to the spine, which are referred to as the core muscles. Pilates aims to strengthen these core muscles while integrating the muscles of the trunk, the pelvis and the shoulder girdle. A strong core is important to perform the most simple of tasks such as walking up stairs to more difficult tasks such as moving furniture or performing a highly challenging sport. Individuals with superior core strength have better overall neuromuscular control and, in general, are less likely to sustain injuries while performing these simple or more difficult tasks.

pilates for rehabilitation and prevention of injury

Strengthening of the core muscles in Pilates, with attention paid to posture, muscle performance and motor control, form a strong basis for rehabilitation of most injuries or chronic problems. Pilates works as a method of rehabilitation and as a method for preventing injury as:

- Pilates develops smaller muscles groups that support weak or injured muscles.
- Pilates stresses the importance of detailed and precise movement, which is important while gaining strength in a weak or injured group of muscles.
- Pilates develops body awareness, which allows for faster recovery and better overall balance to prevent injury.
- Pilates is gentle on the joints and is a low impact form of movement and therefore avoids any inflammation or overuse syndromes.

Some of the conditions and diseases that Pilates can successfully treat are chronic neck and back pain, sciatica, shoulder problems, bursitis, ankle injuries, knee and hip replacements, fibromyalgia and many others.

the other benefits of pilates

Beyond its power to recuperate and strengthen the muscles and joints, Pilates can dramatically transform the way that the body looks and feels. Pilates creates a sleek and toned body and as body awareness increases both posture and body movement are transformed. In addition, flexibility in both muscles and joints is increased and agility is enhanced. As Joe himself said, "In ten sessions you will feel the difference, in twenty you will see the difference, and in thirty you'll have a new body."



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