

# Massage & Body Maintenance

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

## Stretch Out

A few precautions can prevent future pain

Kelli Crosby

You brush your teeth daily because you don't want cavities or gum disease, right? Well, what do you do on a daily basis to prevent tension in your neck? Brushing your teeth offers you preventive dental care, but what if you could learn to be preventive with the rest of your body?

We all have bad daily habits we don't even notice until something starts to hurt. These bad habits are the root cause of many painful conditions. To help prevent pain, however, we can turn these bad habits into good habits that can be worked into our daily routine. Here is some general advice that can apply to almost every part of daily living.

### Sit Up Straight.

Sit in a chair with your hands on your hips. Slouch. Feel how your hips roll back (if you're wearing jeans, you'll be sitting on your pockets). Now sit up straight by moving your pelvis forward and centering your weight over your pelvis and off your buttocks.

### Sleep on Your Back or Side.

Sleeping on your stomach makes you twist your neck and body in order to breathe. This twisted position is terrible for your spine, especially for prolonged periods during sleep. Check your pillow and make sure it has a thickness that will support your neck in a position neutral to the rest of your spine. Try a

*Yoga is the fountain of youth. You're only as young as your spine is flexible.*

-Bob Harper



Even just a few minutes at work can help turn bad habits into good ones.

### Don't Slouch.

Slouching puts strain on your neck and can give you a headache. Your head weighs roughly 10 pounds-about as much as a bowling ball. Your spine is designed to balance that bowling ball when you're in an upright posture. If you slouch, your muscles have to do more work to hold your head up, which makes your muscles tight and angry.

memory-foam contour pillow, especially if you are a side sleeper.

### Bend with a Straight Spine.

Bending over with a curved back puts pressure on your disc material and strains the spine. The pressure created during incorrect bending can cause the

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### Office Hours and Contact

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discs to bulge and put pressure on spinal nerves. Your back was not made to lower and raise your body—that's what your buttocks, hips, and knees are for.

Stand with your knees shoulder-width apart and pretend you are going to lift a 50-pound box off the floor. If you are bending your knees and hips and using your legs to lower and raise your body weight, you are lifting correctly. Now, use the same technique to pick your shoes up off the floor. Think about a squatting movement when you need to lean forward, too—such as while washing your face in the sink. Let your hips and knees do the work.

### **Take Regular Stretch Breaks.**

The muscles in your arms and hands get tight when you grip or pull. The muscles in your neck and shoulders get tight when you reach forward or away from your body. Give these muscles a break with a simple stretch.

It only takes 10 seconds to lengthen the tight tissue, which will take pressure off your joints and prevent chronic conditions like tendinitis and bursitis. Watch for opportunities to work in a brief stretch.

### **Undo Yourself.**

Evaluate the position of your body during your daily activities and make sure you "undo" that position during the day. There is no way to teach a stretch for every single activity you do, but if you take the time to reverse the position of the joint and stretch in the opposite direction, you will lengthen tight tissue and reduce repetitive strain on joints.

## **Tips to Save Your Body**

Replacing bad habits with good ones takes time and thought, but the effort is well worth it. Here are some helpful tips to keep you on track.

-- If you keep waking up on your stomach, wear a pair of gym shorts to bed and put a golf ball in each pocket. When you roll onto your stomach, the golf balls will wake you up and you can return to your back or side.

-- When unloading the dishwasher and getting laundry out of the machine, pose

like a tennis player waiting for a serve. The knees are over your toes (but not beyond the toes), buttocks are backward, and shoulders are forward.

-- Don't try to carve out 30 minutes daily for a stretching routine. If you stretch regularly throughout the day, you will be more effective at keeping tissue loose. Remember, it only takes 10 seconds to stretch a muscle—so find those seconds during your day and make the most of them.

-- Think about stretching the same way you think about hydration. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink water; by then you're already dehydrated. If you wait until something hurts before you stretch, you could develop chronic tension that can lead to everything from a headache to tendinitis.

A daily stretching routine will help

prevent future issues and address current ones. Don't wait until it's a problem. Start stretching today and, little by little, your body will thank you.

*Kelli Crosby is the author of How to Think Like a Physical Therapist in Your Everyday Life. She graduated in 1999 from the University of North Florida and completed her specialty certification in orthopedic manipulative therapy in 2006.*



**Stretching for 10 seconds can take pressure off your joints and help relieve pain.**

# The Wonders of Water

## For Skin Health and More

*Shelley Burns, N.D.*

Creams, nutritional supplements, treatments, lotions, and potions. We are always looking for the next miracle product to keep skin looking healthy and young. However, there is one essential, inexpensive, and often overlooked nutrient right at your fingertips: water.

Just as a car cannot function without oil, our bodies cannot function without water. After oxygen, H<sub>2</sub>O is the most important component of the body, responsible for 65-70 percent of its composition. And of this, 80 percent is dedicated to the skin.

Water is the medium for various enzymatic and chemical reactions in the body. It moves nutrients, hormones, antibodies, and oxygen through the blood and lymphatic systems, and it also helps form the matrix of the skin. Devoid of water, the skin becomes dehydrated, resulting in a dry, dull tone.

It's likely that the moment a person feels

thirsty, mild dehydration has already set in. To keep the complexion looking smooth and blemish-free, drink water upon waking and continue drinking it throughout the day at one- to two-hour intervals. At least six 8-oz. glasses of water should be consumed daily and more if you are exercising, perspiring, and/or in hot weather. Ideally, intake should be between ten and twelve 8-oz. glasses of water a day. One note: Don't increase water intake all at once, as the kidneys and digestive system need time to adjust. Add one 8-oz. glass every day or every second day.

What counts toward your daily water intake? Just the basics: water and herbal tea. Caffeinated beverages and alcoholic drinks are diuretics that can contribute to dehydration, requiring even more hydration after drinking.

Not only is water important for skin health, it can also play a key role in the prevention of disease. Drinking eight glasses of water a day can decrease the

risk of colon cancer, bladder cancer, and potentially even breast cancer.



**Water helps keep the body at optimum health.**

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# Salt Story

## Good for your skin, but limit your intake

*Shelley Burns*

With all we hear these days about reducing salt (sodium) in our diets, it's easy to lose sight of the fact that salt is an essential element for human life.

It's true we need to be cognizant of how much sodium we ingest in our diets. Excess salt can cause high blood pressure, heart disease, and kidney problems. These are serious conditions. A less serious, but still important, result of excess sodium is water retention. Water retention leads to puffy eyes and dry skin--two effects we don't want to encounter as we strive for healthy skin.

We usually get enough salt from our diets naturally, but we start to run into trouble when we reach for processed foods. Fast food and ready-made meals contain excessive amounts of salt. Out of habit, we may then reach for the salt

shaker to further enhance flavor. The more we salt our food, the more salt we want, creating something of an addiction. We would be better off using fresh herbs, spices, and lemon to flavor our foods.

The recommended daily intake of salt is 1,500-2,400 milligrams. Those with high blood pressure may need to reduce salt intake to less than 1,500 milligrams, or use a salt substitute.

Is there anything good to say about salt? Of course. Salt therapy, or halotherapy, has been used since the early 19th century to treat respiratory and dermatological issues. Salt therapy increases circulation to the skin, which elicits healing. As it does its magic, itching will begin to subside and small cracks will vanish from the skin. Salt also

kills bacteria and fungus and, when used externally, has anti-inflammatory properties.

So put away the salt shaker and treat yourself instead to a halotherapy experience--both steps will improve your health.

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

*Think of the circular path of each movement, in Tai Chi every movement is in curve or circle that has no ending or beginning.*

-Dr. Paul Lam

#### Benefits of Massage Therapy for Degenerative Disc Disease

Relief from the pain of degenerative disc disease is unlikely, unless the cycle of muscles responding to pain by contracting, is interrupted. Massage therapy is highly successful at breaking this cycle helping the muscles to relax and increasing blood circulation to the muscle.

By applying compression, pain is more evenly distributed, which causes a decrease in pain and relief from tightness and inflammation caused by muscle contractions.

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