

Connecticut Orthopedic Update

July 2002 • An Independent Orthopedic & Sports Medicine Newsletter for Physicians and Others

Vitamin E May Ease Muscle Aches

Vitamin E may be just the ticket when it comes to those aching muscles after a strenuous workout, according to a new Tufts University study. Vitamin E, which has already been touted for soaking up excess free radicals, now appears to blunt muscle soreness and damage following vigorous exercise. The study involving only men showed that young men saw the most benefits but older men still saw results with Vitamin E use. The study recommends Vitamin E doses of 200 to 400 IU a day for maximum effectiveness.

Smoking Affects Bone Health

Smoking impairs the health of bones, joints, and muscles, according to the Journal of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (JAAOS). The article says that smoking decreases the ability to form bone, putting patients at risk for osteoporosis. Nicotine was also blamed for lessening the benefits of estrogen. Cigarette smoking also accelerates the bone loss of osteoporotic postmenopausal women, says the author. The JAAOS article reported that smoking is associated with bone loss, hip fractures and decreased ability for bones and wounds to heal.

Heat Wraps Provide Longer Relief

Researchers have found that heat wraps provide, better, more long-lasting pain relief than nonprescription pain relievers, according to a study published in *Journal Spine*. The study showed that there was 55% greater reduction in stiffness with the heat wrap than with acetaminophen and a 23% greater reduction with the heat wrap than with ibuprofen. The study recommended heat-wrap therapy as a "first line therapy for the treatment of acute muscular low back pain."

Strength Training Cuts Bone Breaks

Strength training not only can make you look and feel younger but it can help reduce the risk on bone-breaking falls, says a new book, *The Fitness Factor*. "Recent research has shown that weight training can be good for the cardiovascular system, can improve or prevent osteoporosis, can reduce the chance of developing diabetes and

can elevate moods. It also appears to improve balance, reducing the risk of bone-breaking falls," says author Dr. Lisa Callahan.

New Computer Can Predict Injuries

The Italian soccer team AC Milan is working with a computer company which has developed a computer smart enough to predict sports injuries in athletes. AC Milan and Computer Associates International is testing the feasibility of using neural networks, a form of artificial intelligence, to predict injuries and optimize conditioning for each athlete. During workouts, players wear sensors which transmit information back to the neural network via radio waves on their bodies. As a result, the computer gets feedback while the athlete works out. The computer also is fed psychological data, as well as information on what each player eats.

Advice for Moms With Back Pain

Back pain is a common complaint of pregnant women and, while the pain usually subsides shortly after giving birth, it may return as you begin lifting and carrying the infant on a daily basis. As the infant grows, the weight load increases and back pain can result. To lessen back pain, begin exercising soon after delivery to restore muscle tone to the abdominal and back muscles. Try to return to your normal weight within six weeks after giving birth. Avoid stretching your arms out to pick up the baby. Bring the baby close to your chest before lifting. Avoid twisting your body. Bend at your knees—not at your waist. Do not carry a child on your hip as this overloads the back muscles.

Choosing The Proper Backpack

Even though school is out for the summer, it won't be long for the back-to-school shopping frenzy is here. Special consideration needs to be given to the selection of children's backpacks. A new South Australian study has shown there is evidence refuting the 'rule-of-thumb' to carry the backpack high on the back. Typical school backpacks should be positioned with the center at waist or hip level. The study also showed there is no evidence for the 10% body weight limit.

Connecticut Orthopedic Update is published by Connecticut Family Orthopedics, 33 Hospital Ave., Danbury, CT. Comments or suggestions for future editions may be sent to Gabe Carubia, practice administrator, who may be reached at 203-792-5558; via email at ct.fmyl.orthopdcs@snet.net; or via fax at 203-731-3213.