



Getting You On

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

A Quarterly Newsletter from Peninsula Rehab & Sport Medicine

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HOW DO I CHOOSE A PHYSICAL THERAPIST?

The criteria you use to choose a physical therapist can be varied. Your doctor may recommend someone. You may have been to someone previously and want to go back, or simply want to try someone different. Location could play a part in where you go, and a recommendation from a friend or family member could also play a part.

In the end, as long as you have your doctor's orders (prescription) for the physical therapy, *the choice of therapist is entirely up to you*. Check your insurance to find an in network provider. Look in the yellow pages for a convenient location and then visit websites for bios on therapists and information about the services they provide. Once you've chosen a clinic, stop in if possible to meet the therapists and tour the clinic to see if they have the equipment and other amenities that will serve to give you the best possible treatments. Remember it is your right to choose your physical therapist, no one else's.

PHYSICAL THERAPY AND THE CAMARADERIE OF HEALING

In doing research for this issue of The Road to Recovery, I ran across an article called *Physical Therapy and the Camaraderie of Healing* written by Caitlin Kelly, writer for the New York Times. This article appeared way back in February of 2009, but is struck a chord and we hoped you might enjoy reading it. We quite often talk about how sometimes "it's old home week in the clinic today!" Many of our patients know each other, or get to know each other while they rehab. Here's the article

By CAITLIN KELLY – writer for New York Times Published: February 16, 2009

I first had physical therapy at 27, after I slipped on an icy Montreal sidewalk and tore the ligaments in my left ankle. I had it again at 42 and 43, after surgery on my right and left knees, and most recently I've had it on both shoulders.

My orthopedist likes to say surgery is half the battle. If so, it's the easy half. The slow and repetitive work of physical therapy often starts the next day, and for an injury like a tear in an anterior cruciate ligament, it can take up to six months. Before you've done it, it's hard to imagine anything is going to take so long and hurt so much.

Part of the challenge is the nature of arthroscopic surgery, whose multiple incisions are often so tiny they barely leave a trace. I've had torn [meniscus](#) (cartilage) removed from both my knees, and I have to look really hard to find my scars. Removal of bone spurs from my shoulder through four incisions left my skin almost smooth. Surely this is a good thing.

But those minuscule entry points make it difficult to comprehend what has been done in there. After only 45 minutes under general anesthetic and with

no huge incision or bloody wound, why am I in so much pain? And why do I have to keep doing these silly exercises?

Surgeons have little time, and sometimes less appetite, to discuss the minutiae of a procedure's aftereffects. Often it's the physical therapists who patiently explain what the physician did and why we now have to relinquish huge chunks of our time to rehabilitation.

Physical therapy, or P.T., demands the month-after-month tedium of spending hours in a room filled with strangers stretching colored rubber bands or spinning their arms in circles.

The rituals are oddly and intimately public. Patients of every age, race and income level share a large, sunny room. We do our leg-raises side by side on wide beds. We wait in line for the pulley, the elliptical and the arm bike. We learn a new language and its tools: the strap, the stick, shrugs and pinches.

Everyone ends up in P.T. — lithe teenage athletes, construction workers and police officers with job-related strains, C.E.O.'s with skiing injuries, older people with replaced knees and hips. I've commiserated there with an Episcopal minister, an Ivy League economics professor and a firefighter.

The rituals become routine, starting with a heating pad and nerve stimulation, ending with the soothing benediction of a black rubber ice pack. We learn to bend our lives around the inexorable, unfashionable truth — healing takes work and it takes time.

Camaraderie grows as patients compare notes on the frustration of needing help for tasks as simple as pulling up your trousers or opening a can of soup.



Women commiserate with the new knowledge that a bra strap can pinch a healing shoulder like steel cable. Struggling to complete even the simplest of tasks in a room full of fellow adults is humbling. When I see someone's jaw clench with effort, I remember that lifting a one-pound weight can be tough.

I never expected to forge a multi-year relationship with my physical therapists, but I have. I like Helen and Matt and Stephanie and Richard. Really. I just hope I never see them again I don't envy them their job, stretching and shaking and manipulating our joints to loosen them and keep them flexible. It has left me gasping in pain, sometimes even tears. I can't imagine having to intentionally inflict pain, but that, one quickly learns, is an inevitable part of healing.

It must be difficult for our physical therapists to cheer us on for what are, in other circumstances, a toddler's proud achievements — when we have regained the ability to tie our shoelaces or walk steadily across a room or throw a ball.

There is an upside. Because we see them so frequently for months, we get to know our physical therapists, and they us, in ways we'll never know our doctors. We learn where they live and go on vacation, who has a new puppy, whose husband changed careers.

It's not an intimacy we would choose. But, shoved out of our private, busy lives, whether reluctantly or gratefully, we fall into their strong, skilled, waiting hands.

The Truth About Dietary Supplements

Dietary supplements can help us be healthier, build strong muscle tissue, keep our bones and joints healthy, and help support good health in general.

Always ask your doctor before taking a supplement. If, for example, you don't need any extra iron in your diet, you should not take a supplement that contains iron. Too much iron can cause serious health problems. Vitamin A is stored in the body and can accumulate to dangerous levels. Several other vitamins and minerals can accumulate in the body too, so never take supplements without consulting your doctor. Even a simple multi-vitamin tab comes in so many different forms that you should be careful about what you choose.

It's another truth that the dietary supplement industry is a \$22 billion industry. Do we really need \$22 billion dollars worth of supplements to stay healthy? Are we spending money on pills and powders that may be doing nothing but making our wallets thinner and, in some cases, our waistlines bigger? The truth lies somewhere in between eating a balanced meal and that 22 billion dollars. Who/what are you? Are you a body builder, a marathon runner, a professional wrestler, an obsessive compulsive exercise fiend, or a crane operator? Or are you just the person who lives next door to the person who lives next door to you? You take care of the kids, cut the grass, pull a few weeds, wash the car and have cookouts in the back yard.

It's sometimes hard to rely on just the food we eat to provide us with all the nutrition our bodies need. People with certain conditions may require supplements. Gluten allergies for example, would prevent someone from eating healthy whole grain wheat products. Someone who has stomach trouble may not be able to tolerate eating acidic foods such as tomatoes or oranges. As a whole, a balanced diet is all most people need. Another truth however, is that a significant part of the population doesn't eat a balanced diet on a regular basis. Busy lifestyles keep a lot of people at the fast food drive through windows, or in the frozen food aisle purchasing high fat, high sodium, and high carbohydrate meals.



The fact of the matter is protein, fat and carbohydrates are the fuels you need to keep your body running. Protein builds muscle, fat (good fats such as olive oil, avocados, etc.) is essential to help absorb fat soluble vitamins A, D E and K, and carbohydrates are what we use for instant energy and to stabilize blood sugar. If you can balance these needs, you'll get most of the nutrients you need. But if you can't a supplement may be helpful.

A multi-vitamin with minerals is by far the most widely used supplement. Find a good one and make sure you read the label. Check to see if it contains a lot of sugar, or has specific nutrients that you don't need, like the iron mentioned above.

Omega-3 fatty acid supplements provide nutrients that are harder to get in your diet. Fish oil and flaxseed are two excellent sources for Omega-3. Salmon is probably the best food source for it. A calcium supplement is also a good one to take if you need it. Joint supplements such as Glucosamine Chondroitin can be helpful and are also harmless if you need them and don't have a condition which would preclude you from taking them. So ask your physician about these also.

Information about supplements can fill a book – a big book. We've only touched on a few of the most common that people use.

📌 **Save your money.**

Many supplements, especially the powdered ones, are useless for most of us in that they have very specialized uses for athletes and body builders, and can be full of calories and sugars. Choose carefully.

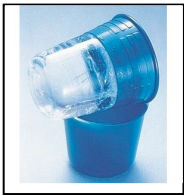
📌 **Eat well and exercise.** You can get good nutrition from a balanced and varied diet. Exercising keeps you strong!

📌 **Talk to your doctor.** Don't take anything your doctor doesn't approve of, especially if you have other health issues.

For more information about nutrition and supplements from the Mayo Clinic:
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/supplements/NU00198>

GADGETS TO MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD

Ask your doctor or physical therapist about the benefits of trying out these gizmos.



Cryocup Ice Massage

It's great for spot icing to reduce inflammation. Massaging a chronic sore spot can be difficult and painful. This little gadget combines icing with massage and can reduce pain and inflammation while breaking down adhesions and scar tissue. \$5 - \$10, at www.cryocup.com



The Stick

It's good for smaller areas and more precise self massage. The stick allows you to focus on a sore spot and to control pressure applied. Use it to loosen up muscles and improve range of motion. \$48 at www.thestick.com



Thera Cane

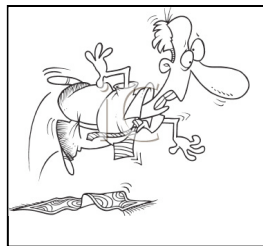
It's good for reaching hard to reach spots along the back neck and hips. The J-shape design and the knobs on the handles make it easy to apply the right amount of pressure to a specific spot. <http://www.theracane.com>

PREVENTING FALLS AT HOME

Anyone can trip and fall over a loose carpet edge or a laundry basket that got left in the hallway. If you have someone at home who has some difficulty getting around and uses a cane or a walker, or is on crutches, you should take extra precautions to avoid taking a spill. Here's a checklist to make your home as "fall safe" as possible.

ALL THROUGH THE HOUSE

- ⓐ Remove all throw rugs
- ⓐ Secure all carpet edges
- ⓐ Remove low furniture and objects on the floor
- ⓐ Reduce clutter in general
- ⓐ Remove cords and wires on the floor
- ⓐ Check lighting for adequate illumination at night, especially in pathway to the bathroom.
- ⓐ Secure carpet treads and remove clutter from stairs
- ⓐ Install handrails on staircases
- ⓐ Eliminate chairs that are too low to sit down or get up from.
- ⓐ Avoid using floor wax unless it's a non-skid brand
- ⓐ Ensure that telephones can be reached from the floor



IN THE BATHROOMS

- ⓐ Install grab bars in the tub or shower and by the toilet
- ⓐ Use rubber mats in the tub and/or shower
- ⓐ Take up floor mats when not in use
- ⓐ Install a raised toilet seat if necessary

OUTSIDE

- ⓐ Repair cracked and uneven sidewalks
- ⓐ Install handrails on stairs and step
- ⓐ Trim shrubberies to clear pathways to the house
- ⓐ Install adequate lighting by doorways and along walkways.

Anything you can do to keep pathways clear, well lit and free of clutter will go a long way in preventing someone from falling.

AIR TRAVEL AND HEALTH RISKS

The dangers of long flights in cramped quarters have been the subject of media attention and have prompted both passengers and airlines to examine the pitfalls of air travel. In response, some airline carriers, such as JetBlue, have begun including passenger seat exercises in the seatback pocket on all flights.

The lack of leg room on most airplanes can cause passengers to experience leg cramping, toe cramping, and general lower-body aching. Lack of movement while on a flight can also cause the feet to swell.

If you end up in a spot where you can't move around much, try some simple, seated exercises to keep the blood flowing, the joints mobile, and the muscles relaxed while en route.

- ⓐ Lift your knees up toward the ceiling as if you are marching in place
- ⓐ Bend and straighten your knees as far as seat room allows
- ⓐ Move your ankles up and down by lifting your heels up and then pointing your toes up
- ⓐ Move your ankles in circles
- ⓐ Gentle stretching of the back and shoulders

Although many of the aches that passengers experience are more uncomfortable than dangerous, there are some potentially serious health risks that can result from sitting for long periods of time on an airplane. Perhaps the most serious risk to those who fly is the development of deep vein

thrombosis (DVT), sometimes called "coach class syndrome," which results when blood clots form in the legs during four or more hours of confinement in a cramped seat. When the plane lands, small clots normally dissolve; however, larger clots may not. They might then break loose days or even weeks later, travel to the heart or lungs, and possibly cause death.



APTA suggests that fliers not stay seated for the duration of the flight and recommends that passengers walk up and down the aisle of the plane every hour or so to work the leg muscles and ease the back--that is, if the captain has turned off the "Fasten Seat Belt" sign!

Doing some of the above movements during the flight can help to prevent fluid build up in the legs, relieve a stiff and/or sore back, and stiff, tight

hips when rising to walk after prolonged sitting.

Sitting with your feet propped on your carryon luggage can help to relieve strain on the lower back.

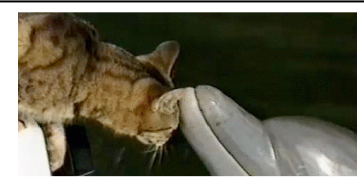
Physical therapists also recommend wearing compression stockings to help reduce the risk of DVT. Compression stockings work by applying maximum pressure at the lower-leg area, progressively decreasing in pressure toward the top of the leg. The pressure compresses leg veins, thus helping to prevent clot formation. You can ask your physician about these before your trip.

Another consideration while flying is the dehydration that occurs from the high altitudes at which planes now fly and the dry, pressurized cabin air. These conditions may lead to muscle cramping and aching, so APTA advises passengers to drink plenty of water before and during the flight.

Believe it or Not!!



Yes, that is a full sized garbage can with a CRAB on it! The coconut crab, *Birgus latro*, is the largest land-living arthropod in the world, and is probably at the upper size limit of terrestrial animals with exoskeletons in today's atmosphere. It is also known as the robber crab or palm thief, because some coconut crabs are rumored to steal shiny items such as pots and silverware from houses and tents. Fortunately, it lives in half way around the world in Indo China!!



Who would believe a cat and a dolphin would enjoy each other so much! There were actually 3 dolphins getting in on the fun! If you haven't already seen this video, try this link to watch it. It's heartwarming and so much fun to watch!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGrN3uWO_Rs

GOING GREENER! SAVING TREES --- LESS TRASH

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Peninsula Rehab & Sports Medicine

is a state-of-the art Physical Therapy facility specializing in:

- * Orthopedics
- * Sports Medicine
- * Industrial Rehabilitation
- * Ergonomics
- * Manual Therapy
- * The needs of the active retirement community

with the goal of getting you *on the road to recovery* and back to the activities you enjoy.

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