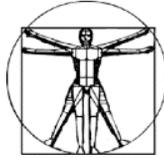


## ASK THE PHYSICAL THERAPIST

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2017



### STRENGTH VS. FLEXIBILITY

I am often asked the question if my leg or knee joint hurts should I stretch it? Well that would actually depend on what the problem is. Usually with a joint, you want to strengthen the muscles not only surrounding it, but also those above and below the area. So with a knee joint you want to strengthen the gluteals (buttocks) and quadriceps (front of the thigh), hamstrings (back of the thigh), and calves. The problem with over-strengthening is that you can sacrifice flexibility. Think of a body builder: you may have seen them walking with bent elbows. This is a two-fold problem – 1. There is a muscle imbalance between the biceps and triceps causing the triceps to lengthen and weaken and the biceps to shorten and strengthen 2. Due to the imbalance, the flexibility at the elbow joint has been stiffened.

On the other hand, you don't want to sacrifice strengthening for flexibility. A gymnast or dancer who can get there leg to 180 degrees no longer has the strength around the hips or low back to support it. They end up with hip impingements, wear and tear of cartilage, low back pain.

So you need to get to that happy medium. You need the flexibility in muscles and joints to quickly get to the tennis ball on the other side of the court without tearing the muscles, but you also need the strength to be able to jump into a jete (leap) and land from it in dance. The activities that spend so much time on stretching, like dance and gymnastics, need to spend equal time in working on strengthening. If you are too flexible, you set yourself up for instability in the joints which can translate to either joint pain or muscle tear as a final result. You need to find the root cause of the injury, which could be an alignment issue due to one side being more flexible than the other, pulling your skeletal system out of whack. Muscles attach to bones so the muscles then are imbalanced and you create a muscle injury. Rather than continuing to stretch the already flexible side, you need to strengthen it to support it. This in turn will actually help to stretch the opposite side.

Back to the question – should I stretch my knee if it hurts? It comes back to alignment and where the issue is stemming from. You strengthen the muscles surrounding the joint that is unstable and create a balance between strength and flexibility.

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**We change people's lives by  
giving them the confidence to  
achieve their goals of an  
active, mobile lifestyle  
without the use of pain  
medications or surgery.**

Did you know that Maryland has Direct Access for physical therapy? That means you can see a Physical Therapist without seeing your physician first and getting a prescription. We can evaluate and treat you without a referral. Through the extensive evaluation, if I feel that other issues may be involved that may require you to see your physician, I will refer you back or recommend someone who is appropriate for you.

**STILL NEED HELP? CALL TO DISCUSS YOUR ISSUES OR BOOK AN APPOINTMENT IF YOU ARE READY: 301-493-9257**

#### UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Alignment/Movement workshop for Recovering from Injuries: Saturday June 17th 1:30-2:30 p.m. at Joy of Motion Dance Center/Friendship Heights, 5207 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Washington DC**

**Pilates/Exercise class: 5 class series for \$95 June 14<sup>th</sup> – July 19<sup>th</sup> (no class on July 5<sup>th</sup>) Wednesdays 12-1 at 10410 Kensington Parkway, Suite 111, Kensington, MD 20895**

If we do not have your email address, please send it to [cynthiaweiss@verizon.net](mailto:cynthiaweiss@verizon.net). This will keep you updated on events and ensure that you receive the quarterly newsletters.

If you are still unsure of Physical Therapy, we offer a 100% **free 20 minute Discovery Call** to answer all your questions and to see if you are the right fit for our clinic. **Call us at: 301-493-9257.** We will get back to you the same day as soon as we are finished with our other patients.

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