

Peaking Interests

The quarterly newsletter
of Apex Physical Therapy

Spring 2006 Volume one Issue two

Low Back Pain The Role of a Physical Therapist

By **Melanie Hollowel, DPT**
Lafayette Hill Physical Therapist

Chances are you've experienced it before: a burning sensation, a dull ache or a sharp pain in your lower back. If you haven't, you likely will at some point in your life because, according to a number of clinical studies conducted over the past decade, low back pain affects 80 percent of American people during their lifetime. It is a leading reason, second only to cold and flu, that individuals consult their primary physician. And it can make everyday life downright miserable.

Often, victims of low back pain find themselves forced to take time off from work, school and recreational activities. Their symptoms, which can be diverse, generally fall under two categories: acute or chronic. Usually, acute low back pain is caused by a single traumatic injury and affects soft tissue like muscles, ligaments and tendons. Chronic low back pain, on the other hand, is more subtle, often worsening over an extended period of time. It may be caused by any number of related

disorders, such as osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, spinal stenosis or degenerative disc disease.

The causes of low back pain are even more profuse and certainly more subtle than the symptoms. Contributing factors can be as simple as the stresses and strains of daily life. However, these pressures can be especially taxing during the winter months. In general, we perform more lifting, cleaning, shoveling and shopping from November to February than any other time of year. Winter sports, such as skiing, snowboarding and ice skating, also serve as stress factors, as well as increasing the risk of falls, another cause of low back pain. And long hours at work, watching TV or traveling to visit relatives can also contribute to the disorder by causing poor posture and lack of exercise.

Whatever the precipitating factor, a physical therapist can be a key member of the medical team working to reduce your low back pain and get you back on your feet. Your family doctor may pre-

See **TREATING**, page 2



Now serving Five locations

Royersford
341 10th Avenue
Suite 101
Royersford, PA 19468
610-792-8100

Blue Bell
676 DeKalb Pike
Suites 105-106
Blue Bell, PA 19422
610-270-0300

Chalfont
1500 Horizon Drive
Suite 102E
Chalfont, PA 18914
215-712-0300

Pottstown-Coventry
10 Glocker Way
Pottstown, PA 19465
610-323-430

Lafayette Hill
466 Germantown Pike
Suite 200
Lafayette Hill, PA 19444
610-832-7510

Hours of operation

Mon-Thurs: 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.
Fri: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sat: 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Check out our Web site

www.apex-pt.com

In this issue...

1 **Low Back Pain**
The Role of a Physical Therapist

2 **Low Back Pain (cont.)**
Treat(ment)s for your Tummy
"The Party's Over" veggie casserole
Referral Rewards Program

3 **News from the Top**
The latest happenings at our clinics

Do it Right: Winter Wisdom

Meet Our Therapists
Brian Warenius— Blue Bell Clinic

4 **Achieving the Apex**
Stories of success from Apex patients

Treating and preventing low back pain with therapy

Continued from page 1

scribe medication or a follow-up with an orthopedic specialist to address the problem. But with more and more studies demonstrating the benefits of physical therapy for back pain, it's more likely you'll be given a prescription for an evaluation by a therapist who will work to return you to your prior level of functioning by reducing pain, improving strength and flexibility and educating you on techniques to prevent further injuries.

At Apex Physical Therapy, our role begins with a one-hour evaluation. Your therapist will start with questions like "How and where is your pain felt?" "When did your symptoms begin?" and "What factors worsen or improve your symptoms?" These questions will help your therapist discern a thorough history of your disorder. They also assist in educating you on your condition and how you can improve it through proper body mechanics and postural techniques, as well as an individualized home exercise program. During this evaluation, your therapist can also answer any specific questions you may have in each of these areas.

Following the Q&A, more tangible measures of your condition – such as active range of motion, muscle flexibil-

ity and strength, and joint mobility – are taken and an individualized treatment program designed. The program will consist of exercise, "hands-on" techniques and modalities, such as hot or ice packs, electrical stimulation and ultrasound.

At Apex, we take pride in the time we spend with hands-on techniques, which improve joint and soft tissue mobility and decrease pain levels by reducing abnormal stresses on the spine.

We also stress the importance of exercise. The program your therapist designs for you will be comprised of exercises that improve strength, flexibility and aerobic conditioning. Most importantly, your therapist will guide you through the program gradually, in a controlled environment.

At Apex, our physical therapists are qualified to perform an evaluation of your

condition. In some cases, we may recommend you visit your family doctor or a specialist before continuing treatment to rule out a more serious condition. Otherwise, our therapists may initiate therapy immediately and send a copy of their findings to your physician.

So, if back pain is limiting you from doing the activities you enjoy, call or visit one of our five convenient locations. Our mission is your recovery!

Low back pain affects 80 percent of Americans, accounting for more sick leave than any other condition.

Treat_(ment) for your Tummy



The Party's Over

Low-Calorie Veggie Casserole

With the holidays over and the candy and baked goods finally spent, it's time to start thinking about shrinking that waistline back down to its original size. This simple, tasty dish is the perfect way to help get you and your family back on the path to healthy eating.

Ingredients

1/2 large eggplant
1/2 lb. fresh mushrooms
2 large zucchini
1 red onion

1/4 cup finely chopped bell pepper
1/4 cup finely chopped celery
1 (1 lb.) can stewed tomatoes
1/8 lb. sliced fresh Mozzarella
3 tbsps. fresh grated Parmesan
Salt, pepper, parsley, garlic powder to taste

Prep/cook time: 1 hour, 20 min
Makes: 1 casserole, 6-8 servings

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees.
2. Peel eggplant and cut into small pieces.
3. Slice mushrooms, zucchini and onion.
4. Place vegetables in deep casserole baking dish, making layers.
5. Add bell pepper and celery.
6. Season with salt, pepper, parsley and garlic powder
7. Pour entire can of stewed tomatoes over mixture.
8. Bake for 45 minutes.
9. Sprinkle with grated Parmesan and top with sliced Mozzarella.
10. Continue baking for 10 minutes or until cheese has melted.

Referral Rewards

In order to thank our patients for recommending our services to others, we've created the Referral Rewards Program. Beginning Dec. 1, 2005, all you have to do is refer your friends or family members to Apex Physical Therapy and you automatically become a member. Just remember to tell them to mention your name when our staff asks, "How did you hear about us?" and we'll take care of the rest.

The program works this way:

- Refer 2 patients: receive a T-shirt specially designed for our Referral Rewards participants
- Refer 3 patients: receive an Apex sweatshirt
- Refer 4 patients: receive an Apex fleece
- Refer 8 patients: receive a \$150 Kravco-Simon gift card, which can be used at a variety of shopping centers
- Refer 10 patients: receive a \$250 Kravco-Simon gift card

American Red Cross Blood Drive

The third annual blood drive at Apex's Chalfont office, held on Oct. 4, was a great success. With 29 pints collected, we *just* missed our collection goal of 30 pints. Many thanks to everyone who came out to contribute!

Welcome to our new staff members

- Greg Schaab, DPT, physical therapist in Blue Bell
- Tara Kane, receptionist in Lafayette Hill
- Vicki Nace, receptionist in Chalfont
- Barbara McClure, MPT, physical therapist in Chalfont

Two Little Bundles of Joy

Apex is pleased to announce that Royersford Managing Director Eric Braun and his wife Leah welcomed son Alexander into the world on Oct. 11. He weighed 9 lbs., 3 oz. and was 21 inches long. Chalfont therapist John Weiss and his wife Heather also welcomed daughter Ella into their family. Born Aug. 15, she weighed 6 lbs., 1 oz. and was 19.5 inches long. All families are doing well.

Wallis Clinical Study

In cooperation with Abington Orthopedic Specialists, Apex's Chalfont office is participating in a national study to investigate the safety and effectiveness of a new treatment for degenerative disc disease (DDD) of the lumbar spine. The Wallis Mechanical Normalization System is an implant technology from Abbott Laboratories designed to treat mild to moderate DDD by stabilizing the spine and reducing pain while preserving range of motion. The device is intended to replace more motion-limiting spinal fusion operations. The study will compare the Wallis System to conservative, non-surgical methods of back pain management, like physical therapy. Apex's role in the study will be to provide the post-operative rehabilitation and the comparative physical therapy treatment.

Meet our Therapists



Brian Warenaus
MPT, COMT, CSCS

Brian joined Apex Physical Therapy as Managing Director of our Blue Bell office in December 2003. He has been practicing outpatient orthopedics for more than 10 years.

In the past, he has had the opportunity to work directly with orthopedic surgeons on a wide variety of musculoskeletal disorders in both pre- and post-surgical situations. He has also been certified as an orthopedic manual

therapist, as well as a strength and conditioning specialist.

At Apex, Brian has developed both general and sport-specific exercise programs for patients and clients and has specific interest in soft tissue and joint mobilization, as well as manipulation techniques for the treatment of musculoskeletal dysfunction.

He received his master's in Physical Therapy from Daemen College and his bachelor of science degree in Health Sciences from Lock Haven University. He is currently pursuing his doctorate in Physical Therapy from Daemen College.

Brian is a member of the American Physical Therapy Association and stays abreast of current research topics through continuing education courses.

In his free time, he enjoys karate, exercise and spending time with his wife and two children.

Do it Right: Wisdom for the Winter

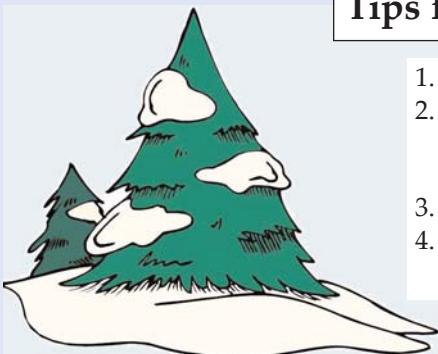
Lifting Tips to Prevent Back Injury



1. Test the object's weight before you begin to lift.
2. Keep your feet shoulder width apart and bend your knees.
3. Stand close to the object and keep it close to your body as you lift.
4. Lift with your legs, not your back.
5. Tighten your abdominal muscles as your lift to support your back
6. Always ask for assistance if you are unsure if you can lift the object.
7. If back injury does occur, seek professional consultation from your doctor or physical therapist.

Tips for Exercising in the Cold

1. Dress in layers.
2. Cover your head and ears – 90 percent of your body heat is lost through your head.
3. Take extra time to warm-up.
4. Hydrate – dehydration increases your risk of frostbite.



Achieving the Apex

What real patients are saying about their successes at our clinics

"I came to Apex after I herniated a disc in my lower back. In a relatively short period of time, I went from intense pain to being virtually pain-free. I leave Apex armed with better knowledge of my body and exercises to continue at home."

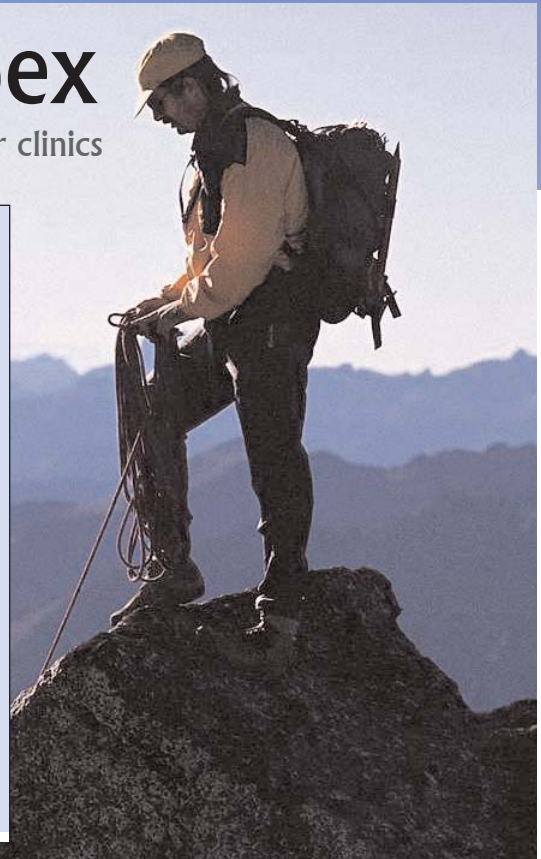
- Linda H.

"When I first came to Apex for therapy, I was in a great deal of back pain due to arthritis. Now, I have very little pain and I am much stronger as a result of my therapist's hard work and very good advice. I feel as though I have been given a new lease on life."

- Barbara G.

"I've had lower back pain for almost a year. I exercise regularly, but exercise only seemed to make things worse. I felt old! It was hard to bend to pick things up, to get things from low shelves, to put things in the dishwasher. Apex brought a focus to my problem and targeted exercises to improve my core strength. I also found the atmosphere at Apex great – relaxed, but professional and personalized. Now, I am 95 percent better. The chronic pain is gone and I know what to do to keep building my core strength and stand and move to prevent problems."

- Janis V.



676 Dekalb Pike
Suite 205
Blue Bell, PA 19422