

LOVE THE BODY YOU'RE IN — FOR LIFE. How listening to your body helps head off aches down the ages

Submitted by: Jungle Cat Solutions

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Ageing is inevitable. But there's a lot of truth in the adage that we are only as old as we feel — and a new research report - Loving Our Bodies Inside Out: Why It's Important to Support Our Muscles And Joints During All Life Stages - Why We All Need To Listen To Our Bodies shows we could be doing a lot more to feel fit, healthy and fabulous from the inside out.

Injury, illness, and the genes we inherit from our parents all impact our muscle and joint health. And the past 18 months of reduced opportunities to exercise, working or studying from home, and additional lockdown weight have taken their toll, too.

Physiotherapist Sammy Margo warns, “The dangers of sedentary lifestyles are not simply due to reduced calorie burning; habitual inactivity leads to a slew of health issues known collectively as hypokinetic diseases.”

Research for Mentholatum, the brains behind the Deep Heat and Deep Freeze, the go to thermotherapy and cooling topical solutions our bodies need to help keep us active found that:

- More than 6 in 10 adults reported muscular troubles
- 50% struggled with joint stiffness
- Only 45% manage a daily walk, and
- One in five sit for hours on end without getting up and stretching to ease muscle fatigue.

But the good news is that it's never too late to take control. That's why Deep Heat has recruited a team of experts with hands-on experience — physiotherapist and sleep specialist Sammy Margo; dietitian Dr Carrie Ruxton; women's health expert Dr Catherine Hood; and personal trainer Chris Ruxton — to review the research and provide evidence-based support on the best ways to build and maintain musculoskeletal strength and resilience.

Their roadmap to muscle and joint wellbeing signposts the key times in our lives that can be turning points on the path to an active and pain-free life. And they suggest strategies, self-care solutions and diet and lifestyle tips to help to keep us all moving — despite the times, and irrespective of our time of life.

The study years: teens and early 20s

The latest research¹ for Deep Heat, the topical heat therapy specialists with a range of products that people swear by whatever age, revealed that two out of five (40%) of 18- to 29-year-olds have reported an increase in back problems over the previous year¹. And 47% of 18- to 29-year-olds have to rest due to lower leg, ankle, or foot pain.

University of Bath researchers found that 12% of adolescents experience a severe episode of pain. One in five adults living with pain experienced untreated pain in adolescence.

Common triggers for muscle problems at this age are:

- Participation in jogging or football which can lead to pulled hamstrings or tight calves.
- Hunching over a smartphone, tablet, or laptop screen, causing shoulder and neck issues.
- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome from studying at a laptop or spending too long texting.

Personal Trainer Chris Ruxton advises: “Head off study pain and discomfort by keeping flexible and avoiding poor posture,” and recommends the cat cow stretch, especially after desk work:

On your hands and knees, gently arch your back by dropping your hips and allowing your belly to relax. Remember to pull your shoulders back. After holding and breathing for a few seconds, now reverse and arch your back like a cat by tucking in your tailbone and drawing your belly up with your head relaxed forward. Breathe and repeat 8-10 times.

Deep thinking: Many parents are, understandably, cautious about giving medication to teens and young people experiencing muscular discomfort — so drug-free products such as Deep Heat Pain Relief Patches can help ease aches and pains. To cool tired legs and feet after a day’s play on the pitch or track and field training, products like Deep Freeze Glide-On Gel offer soothing relief.

The juggling years: the 20s, 30s and 40s

A third (35%) of 30- to 40-year-olds who took part in the Deep Heat research poll reported an increase in back problems over the previous year¹. A third (35%) of 35- to 44-year-olds have had lower back pain. And 10% have struggled with shoulder or upper back pain.

It’s hardly surprising when 50% of people working from home use a laptop sitting on a sofa or armchair and 33% work in bed. Three-quarters of 30- to 44-year-olds know the warning signs that their body is telling them to slow down or give it some TLC — but if they were in pain or discomfort, 55% would not miss a work meeting and 46% would not cancel a social engagement.

Common triggers for muscle problems at this age are:

- Sleeping positions that are not supportive enough e.g. saggy mattresses and old limp pillows, leading to back and neck aches. Back problems due to ergonomically unsound home working environments.
- Back, neck, foot, ankle, and calf issues caused by driving with a bad posture for hours without breaks to stretch.
- Prolonged stress can trap us in a cycle of cortisol production (a stress hormone), chronic inflammation, and pain.

Sammy suggests: “Using topical treatments at home can provide a quick solution to discomfort. For example, Deep Heat Pain Relief Heat Patch is a convenient drug-free adhesive patch that can be worn comfortably under work clothes to relieve aches, while Deep Heat Max Strength combines soothing heat with pain-killing ingredient, methyl salicylate.”

Women’s health expert, Dr Catherine Hood adds: “Our mental health is just as important as our physical health – and, in fact, the two are interconnected because unhappiness, stress and depression can change our posture and have a negative impact on our muscular health.”

Chris advises: “Lower back pain is often a sign that your sitting position needs realignment so make

sure you're not slumping when using a laptop and computer or watching TV." Try cat cow stretches, a classic yoga pose:

Get on all fours, knees under hips, hands under shoulders. Curl toes under and tilt your pelvis down. This will encourage your tailbone to stick up. As you do so, take your gaze up to the ceiling. Hold for 10. Then, bring that pelvis forward, round your back and bring your gaze down, so you're staring at your belly button. Hold for 10 again and repeat both cat and cow, twice more.

Midlife

Losing 0.5 to 2% of muscle mass a year is a normal part of ageing from the 40s and 50s. Obesity is an added risk factor as an increase in body weight can put extra pressure on joints. Muscle weakness in older people costs the UK around £2.5billion annually in extra healthcare .

The Deep Heat research found, 47% of adults aged 60 and over have to rest due to lower leg, ankle or foot pain. And more than a quarter (26%) have experienced muscle strain or sprain.

Common causes of muscle and joint pain at this age are:

- Wear and tear as part of the normal ageing process.
- Weight gain and obesity putting extra pressure on the joints.
- Lack of muscle-strengthening exercises to support the skeleton.
- The effects of other life stages catching up if you haven't taken care of your musculoskeletal health during early adulthood.

Chris says: "Everyone can benefit from resistance or strength exercises, regardless of age or fitness. Strength work, which is simple to learn from a Personal Trainer or in a CrossFit class, helps to maintain muscle health and core stability which are the foundations of good posture. Basically, when it comes to muscle tone, you can use it or lose it."

To promote muscle and joint mobilisation without weights, try:

Leg swings: Standing straight, holding a wall for support, swing your left leg back and forth. Repeat for 10 swings. Then swap legs. You should find that each swing allows your leg to go a little higher, increasing the range of movement at the joint.

Menopause

Hormone changes during this life stage can lead to fluid retention, decreased bone mineral density and weight gain, as well as unexpected muscle aches.

Dr Catherine Hood says: "During early menopause — when the decline in oestrogen becomes irreversible — chronic pain can affect fingers, wrists and knees. Muscle decline also impacts joints and makes sprains and strains more likely. This is because our muscles are essential for core strength and posture. Poor muscle tone leads to poor posture, especially when lifting, carrying, and moving."

Reduced muscle mass and tone, increased body fat, lower bone mineral density, and inflammation in the joints can all prompt pain and swelling.

Common problems associated with menopause are:

- Aches (68%)
- Stiffness (54%)
- Pain (27%)
- Joint swelling (20%) .

Chris says: target abdominal bloating and tighten the core with a Dead Bug movement: lying on your back with knees up, stretch out your left leg and right arm while bringing your shoulders off the floor. Hold for 5-10 seconds and change leg/arm. Hold again for 5-10 seconds. Keep switching legs and arms for 2-3 minutes and repeat a few times a week.” See the full report for more examples of exercises to help ease aching joints and muscles.

When pain is a problem

Deep Heat’s research found four in 10 people with joint and muscle problems take regular pain pills and a fifth take prescription painkillers. While this may provide some short-term relief, it is not recommended as a long-term solution.

Postural alignment and correctional specialist, Jan Keller, says: “With studies showing that around one in five people with lower back pain visits their GP in search of relief, this also puts an enormous strain on an already struggling NHS. There has never been a greater need for increased awareness around prevention and appropriate self-care.”

Deep Heat, the topical heat therapy specialists have a range of products that ticks all the boxes when it comes to effective and targeted relief for muscle and joint troubles.

The Deep Heat range comes in handy formats to suit all needs including:

- Deep Heat Pain Relief Heat Patch — a long-lasting, adhesive patch, which is drug-free, comfortable and odourless
- New Deep Heat Warming Belt — a discrete, non-sticky warming belt with four large heat cells which provide up to 12 hours of deep penetrating warmth to relieve muscular aches, pains, and tension. Particularly useful for lower back or hip pain
- Deep Heat Muscle Massage Roll-on Lotion – a handy roll-on drug-free version, which combines massage with heat therapy to help ease tight, knotted muscles. It can be used before or after exercise
- Deep Heat Pain Relief Spray — an easy-to-use heat therapy spray which is great for helping to
- relieve pain in the muscles, tendons, joints or bones, lower back, and thigh pain, sprains, or strains
- Deep Heat Heat Pain Relief Rub — a rub that provides targeted pain relief and can be used before or after exercise. It also helps with stiffness including back and rheumatic pain, sciatica, fibrositis, sprains and chilblains
- Deep Heat Max Strength — offers more than double the amount of the pain-killing ingredient, methyl salicylate. And it generates penetrating warmth in aching, injured and sore muscles.

Sleep right

Sammy Margo warns: “Pain and sleep issues can become a downward spiral — we are tired, so we sit more, and perhaps eat more, then our muscles and joints become more painful, and it affects our sleep.

“The cycle needs to be broken so, even if you’re feeling tired and depressed, try to keep moving, try some stretches and focus on a good posture. Topical solutions can help to target localised pain and the Deep Heat range provides fast, effective targeted relief with the relaxing benefits of heat therapy. That’s why they are my go-to self-care essential.”

Listen up

Chris says: “Whatever stage in life we’re at, it’s clear from the Deep Heat research that no age group completely escapes the possibility of developing a pain in the neck, back, foot, ankle, or one of the many other parts of our body.” Sammy points out: “We already have huge numbers of people reporting problems, and this will continue to rise as a result of prolonged periods of inactivity, combined with an ageing and increasingly obese population.”

That’s why it’s so important to keep active, while always listening to your body for any signals that it needs some extra attention. The time-tested Deep Heat and Deep Freeze ranges provide simple, non-medical self-care support for joints and muscles.

- 1 Loving Our Bodies Inside Out: Why It’s Important To Support Our Muscles And Joints During All Life Stages - Why We All Need To Listen To Our Bodies; Winter 2021
- 2 Mentholatum, Winter (2021). Data available on request.
- 3 University of Bath (2014) <https://www.bath.ac.uk/case-studies/teenagers-in-chronic-pain/>
- 4 University of Bath (2014) <https://www.bath.ac.uk/case-studies/teenagers-in-chronic-pain/>
- 5 Kara E. Hannibal, Mark D. Bishop, Chronic Stress, Cortisol Dysfunction, and Pain: A Psychoneuroendocrine Rationale for Stress Management in Pain Rehabilitation, Physical Therapy, Volume 94, Issue 12, 1 December 2014, Pages 1816–1825, <https://doi.org/10.2522/ptj.20130597>
- 6 Baumgartner RN et al. (1998) Epidemiology of sarcopenia among the elderly in New Mexico, Am J Epidemiol 147: 755-763.
- 7 King LK et al. (2013). Obesity & osteoarthritis. Indian J Med Res 138: 185-193.
- 8 Pinedo Villanueva RA et al. (2018). Health care costs associated with muscle weakness: a UK population-based estimate. Calcif Tissue Int 104: 137-144.
- 9 Data on file.
- 10 ibid
- 11 Independent, nationally representative survey of 1024 UK adults (59% women) commissioned by Deep Heat, Winter 2021.