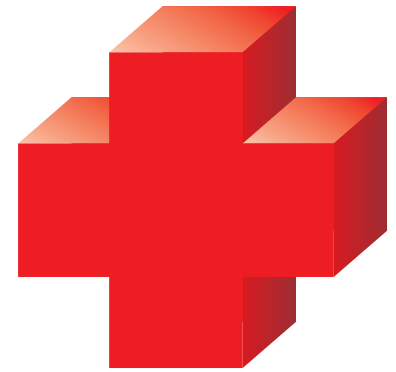


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# Avoiding surgery among possible benefits of physical therapy

**BY DR. ADAM M. CRAMER, PT, DPT**  
For the Star Beacon

How can physical therapy improve your quality of life? Physical therapy is the field of medicine that is devoted to restoring and improving human movement. Physical therapists achieve correct posture and spinal alignment by reducing pain and using physical methods such as strength training, massage and using the body's natural healing processes. Physical therapists are experts in movement, kinesiology (study of human movement) and functional independence. Physical therapists help people of all ages and skills to improve strength, restore mobility and reduce pain. Restoring mobility and pain-free movement is crucial to an individual's ability to participate and perform in recreational and work duties, as well as improving their quality of life and overall health. This leads to reduced risk of falls and reduced risk of stroke and heart attack.

Nobody wants surgery, so then why do individuals consult with an orthopedic surgeon? Surgery is a surgeon's specialty. That's what they are trained to do. Sure, they will offer costly imaging, ineffective injections and tell you to "rest and see how it feels." The problem with this common conservative approach



**Physical therapists can help people improve strength, restore mobility and reduce pain. Restoring mobility and pain-free movement is crucial to an individual's ability to participate and perform in recreational and work duties,**

is that it actually does nothing to help correct the underlying issue that's contributing to your symptoms when you need it the most. Then, in 4 weeks of "letting it rest" it's worse! Even if they offer to go to their own physical therapy office, these physical therapists only get post-operative patients, they will treat you in a group with other patients, you will get lost and they are not equipped to help you avoid surgery. So then when your symptoms are worse in 4 weeks, of course, the only option left is surgery! Avoiding surgery takes an independent Doctor of Physical Therapy whose only focus is helping people avoid surgery, providing one-on-one

care and taking the time to do it right, teaching patients how to effectively control their symptoms and returning to normal symptom-free mobility.

In many cases, physical therapy has been shown to be just as effective as surgery when treating a wide variety of conditions from low back pain, shoulder issues and knee arthritis. How wonderful to be able to participate in several weeks of non-invasive therapy to get the same outcomes as an invasive, costly and risky surgery!

Unfortunately, there are misconceptions about physical therapy that may discourage

SEE **THERAPY**, 7

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# Navigating cold & flu season

## Getting the facts about all those contagious viruses

The common cold and influenza are two contagious viruses that many people may be all too aware of. Although colds and flu can be contracted any time of the year, winter tends to be a prime time for cold and flu outbreaks, as more time spent indoors in close proximity to others provides an easy way for viruses to pass from one person to another.

Despite how common these illnesses can be, there seems to be no shortage of misinformation concerning prevention and treatment of the viruses. Those who think they know all about a cold or the flu can still benefit from a refresher course, which may even debunk some prevailing myths about both ailments.

### COLD

Colds are relatively minor infections of the throat and nose that are caused by more than 200 different viruses. Rhinovirus is the most common cause, which accounts for

between 10 and 40 percent of infections, advises the American Lung Association. Adults get an average of two to four colds per year, while children suffer six to eight colds annually. In fact, in the United States, colds account for more visits to the doctor than any other condition, says the ALA.

The Cleveland Clinic states colds are contracted from inhalation of microscopic particles in the air or from contact with contaminated surfaces. Symptoms can include runny nose, sneezing and nasal congestion, often with sore throat, mild cough, mild aches/ fatigue, and fever in youngsters.

### INFLUENZA

The flu is a contagious respiratory

illness that is caused by the influenza virus. It infects the throat, nose and sometimes the lungs, advises the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Like colds, the flu also can be spread through tiny droplets made when infected individuals cough, sneeze or talk, or by touching infected surfaces.

One common misconception about the flu is that it can be contracted from the flu vaccine. This is not true. Harvard Medical School says the flu shot is made from an inactivated virus that can't transmit infection. People who get sick after receiving a flu vaccination were going to get sick anyway, as it takes a week or two to get protection from the vaccine. Many people assume that because they became sick after

getting the vaccine, the flu shot caused their illness.

Even though the flu and colds share some symptoms, such as runny nose, sneezing, hoarseness, and cough, the flu is not just a bad cold. While very few people have landed in the hospital with a cold, the flu can be so severe as to require hospitalization.

Steering clear of people who are sick, frequently washing hands, sterilizing common surfaces, and getting the flu shot are ways to prevent illness. Antibiotics are not effective against the cold and flu, and antiviral medication can lessen the effects and shorten the duration of flu but may not be able to prevent it.

The ALA notes that herbal and mineral products have received a lot of publicity as cold and flu remedies, but insists that such claims are not solidly supported by science. If symptoms do not abate, see a doctor.

### DID YOU KNOW?

**KIDNEY DISEASE:** According to the National Kidney Foundation, African Americans have an increased risk of developing kidney disease. In fact, African Americans are three times more likely than Caucasians to suffer from kidney failure. The NKF notes that African Americans' risk is elevated because African Americans have high rates of diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. Research points to a lack of recognition as to the seriousness of kidney disease as one factor that might be behind African Americans being so vulnerable to kidney disease. A study published in the American Journal of Kidney Diseases found that nearly half of African Americans have at least one risk factor for kidney disease, but less than 3 percent say they feel kidney disease is a "top health concern." Learning about kidney disease and the vital role kidneys play may compel more people

to prioritize kidney health and make lifestyle choices that can reduce their risk for kidney disease.

**TAKING A SIESTA:** Do you relish the idea of an afternoon nap? If so, you're in good company. According to the National Sleep Foundation, John F. Kennedy, Winston Churchill, Napoleon, and Albert Einstein each fancied afternoon naps. Youngsters nap, and so do many seniors. But by and large, humans are part of the minority of mammals that do not sleep for short periods of time throughout the day, instead dividing their days between sleep and wakefulness. However, there are some benefits to catching a midday snooze. The Mayo Clinic says napping can be a way to catch up on sleep lost during the night or if a person is feeling sleep-deprived. It also may be a way to relax, increase alertness and improve mood. Naps should take place before 3 p.m. and not

exceed 20 minutes. The longer and later one naps, the greater the potential it will interfere with nighttime sleeping or backfire and cause daytime grogginess.

**SUGAR:** is a naturally occurring component in many healthy foods, including fruit. But people looking to eat healthy should be wary of foods that contain added sugars, which can pose a significant threat to long-term health. According to the Harvard Medical School, added sugars are not currently listed on Nutrition Facts labels. However, the HMS recommends looking at the ingredients listings on labels and keeping an eye out for words ending in "ose." The Mayo Clinic notes that fructose, dextrose, glucose, and maltose are the chemical names for various types of sugar. These ingredients can serve as a red flag that a product contains added sugars that can be detrimental to your overall health.



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# Smoking still America's most prolific killer

Smoking is a deadly habit. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say that cigarette smoking causes more than 480,000 deaths each year in the United States. Smoking also cause more deaths each year than alcohol use, illegal drug use, human immunodeficiency virus, motor vehicle injuries, and firearm-related incidents combined. Statistics Canada indicates that around 100 Canadians die of smoking-related illnesses each day.

Despite the knowledge that both cigarette smoking and products such as pipes, cigars, e-cigarettes, and vaping pens have serious health risks, many people feel powerless to quit. Quitting

smoking can reduce the risk for heart and lung diseases, reduce the chances for low birth weight babies and sudden infant death syndrome and improve one's life expectancy.

Each time a person resists a tobacco craving, he or she is one step closer to quitting smoking. Around 90 percent of those who try to quit do so without any help from aids, according to WebMD. But going cold turkey may not be the best path to success, as only around 5 to 7 percent of people who try this route maintain the momentum. However, research published in 2010 in the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, which compared

abrupt quitting to methods designed to gradually quite, found that neither method was necessarily more successful than the other. Individuals who are attempting to quit may need to go through some trial and error before ultimately finding the cessation method that works for them.

Changes in behavior and thinking also can be necessary. The Mayo Clinic suggests avoiding triggers that have previously stimulated a desire to smoke. Some common triggers include being at parties or bars, stressful situations, post-meal smoking sessions, or commutes. Changing routines can help break the habit of

smoking.

Replacement products, whether they contain nicotine or not, can give the mouth something to do and stave off cravings. Many people find chewing gum, sucking on a straw or munching on carrots helps. A variety of nicotine replacement products also may help people quit.

Staying busy and distracting the mind can keep a person away from cigarettes. Enrolling in fitness classes, starting a club or engaging in a hobby or craft can divert attention away from smoking — especially if these activities are not part of one's normal routine.

## Over 50? Colorectal cancer screenings can be life savers

As the human body ages, screening for various conditions and diseases may need to occur more frequently. Routine doctor visits may not be a part of most people's image of the perfect retirement, but such checkups can save lives and make one's golden years much more enjoyable.

The World Health Organization notes that cancer is the leading cause of death

across the globe and that colorectal cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death in the world. A 2017 study published in the journal Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention concluded that risk factor modification, screening and treatment all have considerable potential to reduce colorectal cancer mortality by 2030.

The U.S. National Library

of Medicine recommends that men and women between the ages of 50 and 75 be screened for colorectal cancer every year. Doctors screen for colorectal cancer in various ways, and many of these screenings need not be conducted annually.

However, the USNLM recommends that all men and women between the ages of 50 and 75 receive a fecal occult blood, or stool-based,

test every year. In addition, men and women should receive a fecal immunochemical, or FIT, test every year. The FIT is a simple test that adults can conduct in the privacy of their own homes.

Doctors may recommend additional screenings for colorectal cancer. Upon making such recommendations, doctors will discuss patients' screening options, which include an assortment of

tests, and then recommend which test might be best for the patient.

The USNLM recommends men and women receive stool DNA tests every three years, flexible sigmoidoscopy tests every five years and double contrast barium enemas every five years. Virtual colonoscopies (once every five years) and colonoscopies (once every 10 years) also may be recommended.

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# Don't sleep on importance of snoozing

Deprivation  
can impact  
our immune  
systems



**A recent study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that more than one-third of adults in the United States were not getting enough sleep on a regular basis. Routinely failing to get a good night's rest can have a profound effect on a person's overall well-being, including some surprising side effects, including a compromised immune system and an increased risk for diabetes.**

the immune system response, rendering it less effective when confronting colds and the flu.

The NSF also notes that vaccines might not be as effective if people are not getting enough sleep. That's because chronic sleep loss, which refers to prolonged periods of inadequate sleep as opposed to random nights in which shut-eye proved elusive, reduces the body's ability to respond to viruses like the flu. Even people who have been vaccinated against the flu need their immune systems to be operating at full strength to fight the flu. Without adequate sleep, the immune system cannot perform at peak capacity.

A heightened risk for diabetes is another surprising side effect of prolonged periods of insufficient sleep. The online medical resource Healthline.com notes that lack of sleep affects the body's release of insulin, a hormone responsible for lowering blood sugar levels. People who do not get enough sleep have high blood sugar levels, which increases their risk for type 2 diabetes.

Busy adults often sacrifice sleep to meet the demands of everyday life. But such sacrifices can produce some surprising side effects that may make men and women reconsider their daily sleep routines.

Too much of a good thing also can have extremely adverse effects on health

Lack of sufficient sleep is a problem for millions of people across the globe. But what about too much sleep? Though busy men and women might think it's impossible to get too much sleep, excessive sleep is nothing to joke about.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, most adults need between seven and nine hours of sleep per night (the NSF notes that a small percentage of people may need 10 hours of sleep per night). People who routinely sleep more than seven to nine hours may have an underlying health concern. For example, the NSF notes that a recent study found that routinely sleeping more than 10 hours per night can be linked to metabolic syndrome.

The Mayo Clinic says metabolic syndrome refers to a cluster of conditions that occur together and increase a person's risk for serious health issues, including heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes.

Obesity, headache

and back pain are some additional potential side effects of excessive sleep.

The Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School notes that genetics and age are significant factors in determining the amount of sleep healthy individuals need. However, young adults should resist the notion that they need less than seven hours of sleep per night because they're young, while older adults should similarly avoid thinking that they need more sleep simply because they're aging.

As the NSF guidelines suggest, the sweet spot for healthy adults is typically between seven and nine hours of sleep per night.

A good night's rest is an essential component of a healthy lifestyle. But adults must recognize that excessive amounts of sleep can be just as detrimental as inadequate sleep.

Individuals can speak with their physicians to determine their specific sleep needs.



# THERAPY: Some patients are able to avoid surgery with physical therapy

FROM PAGE 3

people from seeking the skilled guidance of a licensed Doctor of Physical Therapy. Some misconceptions include: insurance coverage, physician involvement, preconceptions about pain, not understanding what physical therapists are capable of treating, clinical indications and therapists' education.

In all 50 states of the U.S., a physical therapist can perform a physical therapy evaluation without a physician referral. By participating in a physical therapist evaluation, you will learn what physical limitations you have and how they relate to your pain or limited independence and how to correct them.

Physical therapy is typically

a covered service by most insurance policies. For people that have Medicare, services are covered at 80% and the other 20% is covered by a supplemental policy if you have one. Other insurance policies may even cover physical therapy costs at 100% making it a very affordable alternative to costly surgeries<sup>3</sup>. Insurance companies recognize the significant value physical therapy holds in the medical field.

Physical therapy is not only for injuries or accidents. The skilled physical therapist is able to evaluate and diagnose potential issues before they lead to more serious injuries or falls. A physical therapist can improve the joint function in one joint to impact the functional performance of another. For example, if you are having

pain in your back related to vertebral dysfunction, the therapist can improve the joint mechanics and muscle action of your low back, and further improve the joint mechanics of your hips and knees, reducing potential complications down the road. All treatments are specific to the individual needs and vary person to person with the ultimate goal of eliminating pain and restoring natural movement.

Doctors of Physical Therapy are capable of and license to treat numerous physical disabilities from orthopedic conditions such as: pre- and post- joint surgery, chronic pain to Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis. Doctors of Physical utilize our body's natural healing abilities by incorporating state of the art

treatment techniques including laser therapy, trigger point dry needling, manual hands on skills, instrument assisted soft tissue mobilization and private education/training so clients understand exactly what is occurring and how they can alleviate symptoms by themselves.

A licensed Doctor of Physical Therapy or physical therapist assistant can only deliver and provide physical therapy services. Physical therapists are highly educated Doctors of Physical Therapy that possess a thorough understanding of the human body's anatomy, physiology, biomechanics and health conditions. All therapists participate in yearly continuing education to maintain their state license to practice. Many therapists hold board

certifications for specific areas of medicine including: neurology, orthopedics, geriatrics, pediatrics, cardiovascular-pulmonary, sports enhancement, research and women's health.

Physical therapy is not something that can be done on your own or by any other health/medical practitioner. You need the critical and trained eye of a licensed doctor of physical therapy in order to assess and determine appropriate diagnosis, limitations and treatments. So, if you want to avoid surgery and become pain free consult with a doctor of physical therapy first!

*Editor's Note: Dr. Adam M Cramer, PT, DPT, is a licensed Doctor of Physical Therapy and the owner of MyoFit Clinic in Ashtabula, Chardon and Middlefield.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

**BREAST CANCER:** Though women may notice various signs and symptoms that could be indicative of breast cancer, breast pain is generally not one of them. The National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc.® notes that there are various harmless causes of breast pain, such as puberty, menstruation and child birth, but that breast pain is not commonly a symptom of cancer. However, in rare instances breast pain may correlate with cancer. For example, breast tumors may cause pain, but cancerous tumors are not generally reported as painful. Though it may not be linked to breast cancer, breast pain should still be reported to a physician immediately, advises the NCBF.

**PSORIASIS:** is a common skin ailment that affects approximately 7.5 million people in the United States, according to the American Academy of Dermatology. While psoriasis affects people in all age groups, it is primarily seen in adults — with the highest rates of affliction among those between the ages of 45 and 64. The most common form of psoriasis is called "plaque psoriasis," which is characterized by raised patches of

reddish skin with silvery-white scale. Between 25 and 30 percent of those with psoriasis will also experience complementary joint inflammation that produces symptoms of arthritis. This is called psoriatic arthritis. Although there is no cure for psoriasis, which is believed to be an autoimmune disorder, it can be managed with topical treatments for mild cases or immune-suppressing medications for severe cases.

**TESTICULAR CANCER :** is not common, but it does affect about one out of every 250 males at some point in their lifetimes, states the American Cancer Society. The average age at the time of diagnosis of testicular cancer is about 33. Unfortunately, the rate of testicular cancer, at least in the United States, increased over the last several decades, particularly in seminomas. It is important to note that testicular cancer can usually be treated successfully, so the risk of dying from the disease is very low. Still, it is important to discuss risk factors with one's doctor, alerting physicians to any abnormalities in the testes or during urination, which may indicate a problem.



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