

Musculoskeletal disorders



What is musculoskeletal disorders?

The musculoskeletal system encompasses all of the physical structures necessary for movement, including the bones, joints, muscles, ligaments and tendons.

Musculoskeletal Disorders or MSDs are injuries and disorders that affect the human body's movement or musculoskeletal system (i.e. muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, discs, blood vessels, etc.). Common MSDs include:

- carpal tunnel syndrome
- tendonitis
- muscle or tendon strain
- ligament sprain
- tension neck syndrome
- thoracic outlet compression
- rotator cuff tendonitis
- epicondylitis
- radial tunnel syndrome
- digital neuritis
- trigger finger or thumb
- dequervain's syndrome
- mechanical back syndrome
- degenerative disc disease
- ruptured disc
- herniated disc

How does exercise help with musculoskeletal disorders?

Regular exercise, in combination with a healthy lifestyle, is the best way to keep the musculoskeletal system strong and healthy.

Things to remember

Advice from a health care practitioner should be sought as soon as possible if your musculoskeletal pain:

- occurs after a traumatic event, such as a car accident or a fall.
- accompanies numbness or 'pins and needles' in bottom, legs or feet.
- regardless of the change in body position or movement pattern, pain does not reduce or change.
- causes wakening during the night.
- accompanied changes to bowel or bladder control.

What type of exercise is best for musculoskeletal disorders?

Exercise Right recommends a combination of stretching, strengthening and improving posture through corrective movements and functional activities. There are two phases to understanding musculoskeletal pain, firstly the need to understand the mechanism of the injury (what movement's cause pain), and secondly how to correct poor movement patterns.

- **Graduated training** is the best medicine is to stay active and start walking at a low-moderate pace. This will assist in maintaining not only aerobic capacity, but assist with being able to complete activities of daily living.
- **Postural correction** which an accredited exercise professional will be able to provide simple cues and exercises to improve and maintain correct posture throughout day to day activities.
- **Strengthening exercises** are important as people with MSDs need to re-educate their body how to move without pain, therefore exercises catering in re-educating the body how to move correctly. Muscle strength, particularly in the small muscles that stabilise the lower back, does not return automatically when low back pain eases. To regain this strength, it may be required to begin with some specific strengthening exercises, with graduated difficulty to progressively increase strength.
- **Stretching exercises** or flexibility training needs to be incorporated in the program to restore full range of movement and improve their ability to complete functional activities. Stretching of the tight muscles/structures should be completed daily.
- **Walking, swimming** and **cycling** also allow people with MSDs to become active and stay active.

Always seek professional advice from an Accredited Exercise Physiologist. Find one here: www.essa.org.au/find-aep