



Physical Therapy's Role in Maintaining a Healthy Spine

As we age, regular exercise plays an increasingly prominent role in reducing the risk of developing spine-related problems. For those in or approaching the golden years, it's important to live an active lifestyle that focuses on healthy posture, function and movement.

It's normal to experience some functional decline as our bones and intervertebral discs deteriorate over time, but that doesn't mean that aches, pains and joint stiffness should go unaddressed. And yet, a good portion of senior citizens in the United States are living with spine-associated pain: A *European Spine Journal* study found that back and neck pain are top complaints among about 20 to 25% of the population over 70 years old.

Some of the keys to caring for your spine—and ensuring your ability to participate in a full and active lifestyle—include following a safe and effective exercise program and maintaining your general health and well-being. Whether these are steps you're actively taking or not, it's a good rule of thumb to schedule an appointment with a physical therapist to address the current—and future—health of your spine.

"I have found that many people do not use or include their core during exercises. Sometimes it merely takes an education session with a Physical Therapist to help find and activate these core

muscles while performing their normal exercise routine that can help provide improved core strength, reduced pain, and a healthier spine." – Brett Teveldal, PT

Following a thorough review of your medical history and activity level, a physical therapist is trained to identify the impact that activities like lifting, sitting and standing have on your spine. The information gathered is used to address any functional limitations you might have and to design an at-home exercise program to keep your spine healthy. In addition to targeted exercises and postural modifications, back and neck stretches are important for improving flexibility, joint function and range of motion and for preventing spine-related injuries.

With the right modifications and interventions, it's possible to live an active and healthy lifestyle while lowering your chances of back and neck injuries and pain as you age. By actively maintaining the health of our spines, we're rewarded with the ability to move about freely, bend with flexibility and stand upright—functions that are easy to take for granted.

“Our bodies were made for movement, physical therapists are movement specialists. Back and neck pain can lead to decreased movement because of a fear that it will increase pain. Through our assessment we will assist in reducing poor mechanics/compensations that may be causing your pain, increase strength and muscle length to improve your function and keep you moving. We want to reduce your fear of movement because regardless of age, movement can assist in improving overall quality of life!” – Kaitlin Davies, DPT



Brett Teveldal, PT
Prairie Rehabilitation - Hartford



Kaitlin Davies, DPT
Prairie Rehabilitation – Tea
Prairie Rehab & Fitness – Worthington Avera

About Prairie Rehabilitation

At Prairie Rehabilitation our Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Hand Therapy, and Speech Therapy experts are passionate about helping our patients reclaim their way of life and function. It's about you; you are unique with distinct qualities, abilities, and needs. At Prairie Rehabilitation we embrace the philosophy of “Patient First” care; treating each individual with precise and personalized care. To achieve the best results and to speed your recovery, we are committed to utilizing the most clinically proven and current concepts in Rehabilitation.

About The Private Practice Section of the American Physical Therapy Association

Founded in 1956, the Private Practice Section of the American Physical Therapy Association champions the success of physical therapist-owned businesses. Our members are leaders and innovators in the health care system. The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) represents more than 85,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants and students of physical therapy nationwide. For more information, please visit www.ppsapta.org.