

Expect Aches and Pains?

As a physiotherapy student, I remember saying jokingly that I wanted to put a sign up in the physiotherapy department that said, “Anyone over 40 should expect aches and pains!” When I think of it now, I realize how much I had been influenced by the erroneous idea that aging guarantees physical deterioration. This is a belief system that enforces the idea that we have no control over our body and we are unable to prevent injuries.

I often hear people saying things like “No pain, no gain” or “Stretch until it hurts”. We are often encouraged to push our bodies past the limit, using our joints as if they were steel and our muscles as if they were rubber. We ice, wrap and medicate, then carry on, pretending our bodies are not subject to wear and tear.

Doing the same motions over and over again can cause damage, especially when working in an awkward position and using force. Musculo-skeletal injury (MSI) is the latest medical term for saying “I over-did it”.

Take a look at your posture when you work. A slumped position with the head and shoulders forward stresses the muscles and joints. Do you have to do a lot of bending and reaching? This puts added stress on the back. Are your wrists bent as you work? Compression of the nerves can result in numbness and pain. A lot of joint damage is self-induced.

Pain is not inevitable. Pain is our bodies way of saying “Hey listen to me, something is not quite right”. Why disregard what your body is shouting? It is the only one you have - you won't be able to get a trade in!

Barbara Purdy is a Physiotherapist and an Occupational Therapist in Vancouver and the owner of Free to Be/Rehabilitation Consulting Inc. www.freetobe.ca