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OPTIMISING YOUR RECOVERY

make you aware of the impact of other stressors and how best to manage them. Other experts for the areas below, such as a nutritionist, may be able to provide additional help if needed.

The three topics below may have an equally important role in your recovery as the rehabilitation, or even for simply improving general health and wellbeing.

HOW TO OPTIMISE YOUR RECOVERY FOLLOWING AN INJURY AND/OR SURGERY

When we think of recovery following an injury or surgery, rest and physiotherapy will usually come to mind. You may be recommended or even required to take time off work, take a specific medication and avoid strenuous exercise. We all know roughly what 'healthy living' is, and that this will benefit us – and yet we often take this for granted and head straight back in to life without giving our body (and mind!) the chance to properly recover.

LOAD MANAGEMENT

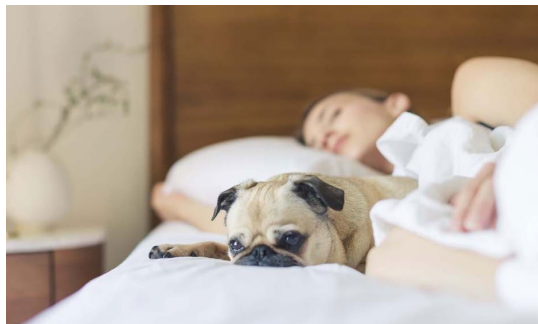
For optimal healing to take place, there needs to be good balance between loading with sufficient rest/recovery. Loading helps stimulate the healing process, and yet overloading will do the opposite. In this case we are referring to 'physically loading' the body, through exercises and rehabilitation. However, we are often unaware that 'load' does not just refer to 'physical strain'. 'Load' can also be referred to as 'stress' or 'strain', such as mental or emotional stress, or stress on our physiological systems. These directly and indirectly impact each other. You could see it as there being a lot of one or different types of stressors, and there then being less energy to deal with the recovery of your injury. Cortisol is the 'stress hormone' and is used to regulate this, however, higher levels of this can cause muscle weakness, fatigue, slowed healing, high blood pressure, weight gain, etc.

A physiotherapist will mainly guide you through managing the build-up of physical loading, but should also

SLEEPING HABITS

What is good sleep? General advice will say to have a good balance between quality and quantity.

- Good quality sleep means you are able to go through multiple full cycles of REM, deep and light sleep during a night.
- Waking up in between is normal, but you should be able to fall back asleep quickly and not wake up often in the middle of a cycle – which may be impacting levels of slow-wave/deep sleep or REM sleep.
- Good quantity sleep refers to the total number of hours – usually averaging around 7-9 hours, but this can vary per person and also reflects quality.
- Often people will think they need less sleep than reality and having that one extra hour can make a big difference for recovery.



Good sleep is about balancing quality and quantity.

NUTRITION INFORMATION

Diet and nutrition is so much more than your five-a-day and varies from person to person.

- Do you have any food intolerances or vitamin/mineral deficiencies?
- Are you caffeine sensitive? Reducing caffeine intake, especially later in the day, can be beneficial.

- Cutting down or even completely avoiding alcohol is always a good idea – as alcohol also impacts sleep quality.
- A recent study from 2020 has even suggested that a low-carbohydrate and low-fat diet can significantly improve quality of life and reduce functional pain in older adults with knee osteoarthritis (Strath et al, 2020).
- Curious to find out what is best for you? Help from a nutritionist in combination with (DNA) testing can help suggest what is best for you.



Nutrition is a key factor in recovery.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

In this case, we refer to mental and emotional stress – which can also be due to your injury. This can impact other processes in our body, and slow down the recovery process. It is important to find ways to manage this – which can be different for each person, therefore it is important to find what works for you.

- Meditation, yoga, breathwork
- Regular exercise
- Sunlight, nature
- Maintaining general work/life balance
- Maintaining hobbies
- Speaking to a professional

This helps us conclude that recovery has multiple aspects. Ignoring one aspect can have negative impact, whereas a focus on all can only help speed things up.

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