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Maletta Pfeiffer & Associates, LLC

Torrington Physical Therapy

Providing Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services to the Community for 30 Years

Volume 1, Issue 1

Fall/Winter 2007

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN, time for the leaves to be raked and soon, but hopefully not too soon, snow to be shoveled. It is also that time of year we start seeing patients who have injured their shoulders, backs, or other areas while performing these activities. Be careful and make sure to take breaks. In this newsletter you will find some helpful hints to prevent injury the next few seasons, as well as some helpful and preventative information. If you do get hurt, you don't have to suffer, or 'wait and see' if it will get better, just call our office and we can help you. Our 5 Physical Therapists have over 75 years of combined clinical experience who will work with you to regain your prior functional activity level. So be careful during this beautiful, but also hazardous time of year!

Dan Albanese, PT/Owner

Congratulations
to Nicole
Duursema who
celebrates 10
years as a Physical
Therapist with us!

Thank you for
your years of
dedicated service!

Is your child's backpack making the grade?— www.apta.org

While backpacks are one of the most convenient ways to carry books and school supplies, an overloaded and/or improperly worn backpack gets a failing grade, according to the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA).

"Wearing backpacks improperly or ones that are too heavy put children at increased risk for musculoskeletal injuries," says Mary Ann Wilmarth, PT, DPT, MS, OCS, assistant dean and director of the transitional doctor of physical therapy degree at Northeastern University in Boston.

Wilmarth, an APTA member, conducted a study in 2001 at a private, pre-kindergarten-through-

9th grade school in Andover, Massachusetts, and found that postural changes, particularly excessive forward head posture, are magnified when the backpack weighs more than 10 to 15 percent of the student's bodyweight. The postural imbalances appeared to be most significant with pre-pubescent female students.

According to Wilmarth, injury can occur when a child, in trying to adapt to a heavy load, uses faulty postures such as arching the back, bending forward, twisting, or leaning to one side. These postural adaptations can cause improper spinal alignment, which hampers functioning of the disks that pro-

vide shock absorption. A backpack load that is too heavy also causes muscles and soft tissues to work harder, leading to strain and fatigue. This leaves the neck, shoulders, and back more vulnerable to injury.

Another study conducted by Wilmarth, this one in 2003, found that college-aged students also were affected by disproportionate weight and improper use of backpacks, although not as significantly as with the younger students.

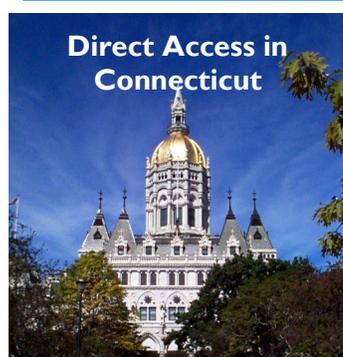
Wilmarth recommends following these tips for safe backpack use:

- Wear both straps. Using only one

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Connecticut is actually one of 42 States that allows direct access, which means, it is not required that patients see their physicians first.

Did you know that you do not need a referral to seek treatment from us?

** subject to Medicare and certain insurance plans*



www.torringtonpt.com

Avoiding falls among the elderly and how PT can help

According to the Connecticut Hospital Association, Connecticut's most common and expensive injuries are fall related. Falls are the leading cause of injury for CT residents age 70 and over.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Among adults 65 years and older, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths and the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma." Many elderly patients we treat are seeking therapy post injury, caused by a fall. The most common fractures reported by the CDC are of the spine, hip, forearm, leg, ankle, pelvis, upper arm, and hand. Many of falls can be prevented and they recommend individuals do four things to lessen their chances of having a fall: 1-Begin a regular exercise program, 2-Have a health care provider review medication, 3-Have vision checked, and 4-Make homes safer.

We all know that exercise makes us stronger, so it's no surprise that it also increases our chances of avoiding a fall. Exercise programs that increase balance and coordination are especially helpful.

Having a medical professional review medications taken, even over-the-counter medications, is especially helpful in decreasing the chances of having a fall. Some medications, or combination of medicines, can cause dizziness or fatigue. As we get older

the way our bodies react to medication also changes, so it's important to have a doctor or pharmacist analyze all medications to reduce side effects and interactions.

Poor vision can cause falls as well. So the CDC recommends an eye exam at least once a year to determine if vision has changed or if a degenerative eye disease, such as glaucoma or cataracts, has developed.

Lastly, making homes safer by eliminating fall hazards and improving lighting will help prevent dangerous falls. They recommend moving trip hazards from pathways and stairwells, removing small rugs or using non-slip mats, moving cabinet items lower so stool usage is eliminated, installing grab bars near toilets and in showers and tubs, using bathmats, using brighter lighting, installing handrails on all staircases, and wearing shoes indoors (*avoid wearing slippers, socks or going barefoot*).

Let's face it, we all know someone who can benefit from this advice, so let's all take some time to assist a loved one. The old adage, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, cannot ring more true.

In conjunction with applying the CDC's recommendations, come see us, we'd like to help. Our therapists will work with you to determine your fall risks and ways to prevent them. We will also develop and exercise program to improve your balance, strength and overall functional independence. Call our office to schedule and appointment and meet with one of our therapists.

Good posture and computer station tips; how we can help

Avoid slumped posture, which strains your back. Good posture helps maintain muscle tone.

- Sit up strait and tall
- Keep your head and shoulders back, avoiding the slumped position
- If needed, use a small pillow, towel roll, or lumbar cushion behind the small of your back to maintain the natural curve
- Keep your feet flat on the floor (or propped on a stool), keeping a 90 degree angle at your hips, knees and ankles
- Use a hard copy holder close to monitor to reduce eye movements and allow good neck posture
- Top of the monitor should be placed at

eye level for proper head and neck posture

- Use proper eye glasses, if needed
- Have adjustable furniture, with padded wrist, mouse, and/or arm rests
- The keyboard should be placed at elbow height, with the elbow positioned at 90 degrees
- Don't forget to look at a far object (15-20 feet) every 15-30 minutes

If you suffer from any aches and pains while working on the computer, our office can help. We will help reduce the muscle and joint strains, and work on strengthening the postural muscles to help prevent future problems. Call our office today!

Is your child's backpack making the grade? (Continued from page 1)

strap causes one side of the body to bear the majority of the weight of the backpack. By wearing two shoulder straps, the weight of the backpack is better distributed, and a well-aligned symmetrical posture is promoted.

- *Put on and remove backpacks carefully.* Keep the trunk of your body stable and avoid excessive twisting.
- *Wear the backpack over the strongest mid-back muscles.* Pay close attention to the way the backpack is positioned on the back. It should rest evenly in the middle of the back near the child's center of gravity. Shoulder straps should be adjusted to allow the child to put on and take off the backpack without difficulty and permit free movement of the arms. Straps should not be too loose, and the backpack should not extend below the low back.
- *Lighten the load.* Keep the load at 10 to 15 percent or less of the child's bodyweight. Carry only those items that are required for the day. Organize the contents of the backpack by placing the heaviest items closest to the back.
- *Encourage activity.* Children who are active tend to have better muscle flexibility and strength, which makes it easier to carry a backpack.

When selecting a new backpack, Wilmarth recommends choosing ergonomically designed features that enhance safety and comfort:

- *A padded back* to reduce pressure on the back, shoulders, and underarm regions, and enhance comfort;
- *Wide, padded shoulder straps instead of narrow straps*, which can hinder circulation, causing numbness or tingling in the arms and, over time, may cause weakness in the hands;
- *Hip and chest belts* to transfer some of the backpack weight from the back and

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- Top of monitor at or just below eye level
- Head and neck balanced and in-line with torso
- Shoulders relaxed
- Elbows close to body and supported
- Lower back supported
- Wrists and hands in-line with forearms
- Adequate room for keyboard and mouse
- Feet flat on the floor

Tips to avoid winter back injuries — www.apta.org

Snow shoveling is a repetitive activity that can cause muscle strain to the lower back and shoulders, especially if a person is out of condition and does not lift properly, says Michael T. Cibulka, PT, MHS, OCS, president of APTA's (American Physical Therapy Association) Orthopedic Section. In fact, back injuries due to snow shoveling can happen to anyone, not just older adults. People between the ages of 20 and 50 are generally more likely than older individuals to injure their back because they may not be aware that they are out of condition, Cibulka says.

Cibulka suggests the following tips for avoiding back injuries from snow shoveling:

If possible, wait until the afternoon to shovel. Many disc injuries occur in the morning when there is increased fluid pressure in the disc.

Lift smaller loads of snow, rather than heavy shovelfuls. Take care to bend your knees and lift with your legs rather than with your back.

Use a shovel with a shaft that lets you keep your back straight when lifting. A short shaft will cause you to bend more to lift the load. Using a shovel that's too long makes the weight at the end heavier.

Because the spine cannot tolerate twisting as well as it can other movement, it is important to avoid excessive twisting and forward bending. Instead, you should bend your knees and keep your back as straight as possible so you are lifting with you legs. Step in the direction in which you are throwing the snow to prevent the low back from twisting. This will help avoid the "next-day back fatigue" experienced by many shovelers.

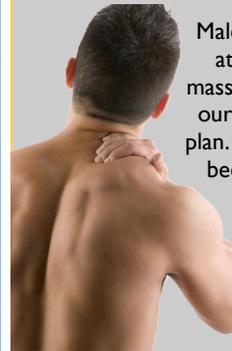
Take frequent breaks when shoveling. Stand up straight and walk around periodically to extend the lower back. Standing extension exercises will help reverse the excessive forward bending that occurs while shoveling: stand straight and tall, place your hands toward the back of your hips and bend backward slightly for several seconds.

"Back injuries due to snow shoveling can happen to anyone, not just older adults."



Massage Therapy at MPA

Let us massage away your pain!



Maletta Pfeiffer & Associates is proud to offer massage therapy as part of our health maintenance plan. Massage therapy has been used for centuries to invoke healing and is based on the simple premise that human touch has healing powers.

Types of Messages we Offer:

- Swedish/Classic Western Massage
- Deep Tissue/Specific Massage
- Sports Massage
- Chair Massage
- Pregnancy Massage

Massage Rates

(as of July 2007)

- 1/2 hour - \$40
- 1 hour - \$65
- 1 1/2 hour - \$85

Purchase a six session package, receive one session **FREE**.

Call to schedule an appointment.
860-489-0867

Gift Certificates Available

Bring in this newsletter and receive **10% OFF** your massage (limit one per customer)

Is your child's backpack making the grade? (Continued from page 2)

- shoulders to the hips and torso;
- **Multiple compartments** to better distribute the weight in the backpack, keep items secure, and ease access to the contents; and
- **Reflective material** to enhance visibility of the child to drivers at night.

Wilmarth found that backpacks with

wheels were a good option for younger students who did not change classes or need to go up and down stairs frequently. However, there are precautions to take with "rolling backpacks" as well. Be sure that the extended handle is long enough so that the child is not forced to twist and bend, and that the wheels are sufficiently large so that the backpack doesn't shake or topple. Older students found traditional backpacks to be better due to the frequent



Wrong
Strap on only one shoulder



Correct
Wide, padded straps on both shoulders



Wrong
Load too heavy



Correct
Load no more than 10-15% of body weight

walking between classes and also when going to and from school.

Parents and children can avoid injury by recognizing the following warning signs that the backpack is too heavy:

- Change in posture when wearing the backpack;
- Struggling when putting on or taking off the backpack;
- Pain when wearing the backpack;
- Tingling or numbness in arms and legs, mostly arms; or
- Red marks on the shoulders.



Orthopedics · Arthritis · Vertigo/Dizziness Treatments · Manual Therapy
Neurological Therapy · Gait & Balance Retraining · Massage Therapy
Private Treatment Rooms · Pre & Post Surgical Care
Custom Foot Orthotics by Stride, Inc.

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“For 30 Years, A Warm and Caring Physical Therapy Center”

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