



Time for a Body Tune Up

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October is Physical Therapy Month. What better opportunity to educate the public about the profession I enjoy so much? Many people have never sought out the services of a physical therapist, but I wonder if part of that reason is that not many know what physical therapy is and what health concerns it can address. A physical therapist is a specialist in the evaluation and treatment of movement disorders. There are many causes for movement disorders, including injury from work, sports or automobile accidents, chronic pain, neurological disorders, degenerative arthritis and other physical diseases that affect the muscles, joints, bones or nerves.

I like to think that a physical therapist is to your body what a mechanic is to your car. The knowledge and skills they possess help all moving parts to work in perfect synergy to prevent breakdowns. They assess movement patterns to find the cause of the problem and use their skills to train you to move in the way that is most efficient to help you get the best “mileage.” Unfortunately, we often treat our cars better than our bodies. We at least get the oil changed and the tires rotated regularly. When was the last time you gave your body a tune-up? Pain from an injury is often ignored because we figure it will just get better with time. In the mean time, your body has adapted to move differently to compensate for the pain, and this can cause areas of the body away from the injured part to break down as well. When the pain goes away, the faulty movement pattern can persist, leaving you vulnerable to future injuries.

If you are one of those people who has allowed a nagging pain or injury go on for longer than a week or two, I encourage you to try out the services of a physical therapist. Addressing that injury early on can mean the difference between a quick recovery of a few short weeks or a chronic problem that persists for months or years. A good physical therapist will do a thorough evaluation and come up with a personalized treatment program to address your specific problem. He or she will teach you how to improve your condition through exercise and learning protective movement patterns so that the injury is not only treated, but further injury is also prevented. Hands on techniques can be used to relax and soften tight tissues and muscles and relieve pain. Treatments are cost effective and covered by most insurance plans. There are generally few side effects, unlike pills that can irritate the stomach and liver or cause fatigue. Your body is your vehicle to get you through life. With the help of your “mechanic,” a physical therapist, you can look forward to a future of many pain free miles.

Just like a mechanic who fixes your car, you have a choice in whom you have physical therapy with. Things to consider when choosing a physical therapist: are they “in network” with your insurance, cost of therapy, appointment availability, location of clinic, what they specialize in, one-on-one therapy and most importantly, ask your friends and family about their experience with physical therapy. Remember, you have a choice in your health care!

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