

Spring Cleaning: What could you be doing to improve your health this spring?

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Spring is a time of growth, awakening and renewal. Around this time of year we often gain new energy to tackle those projects we've put off, and maybe get around to cleaning out the closets. What about the most important part of spring cleaning – your health? Spring is an excellent time to ask ourselves a few questions and take stock of what we could be doing to enjoy a healthier life.

How active are you?

We all know we should be active, but we don't always make it a priority. Staying active provides us with more energy, improves our mood, and is a great stress reliever. And these effects improve the more you exercise. A recent study found that regular exercisers have twice the improvement in mood after exercise compared to non-exercisers. Exercise causes a "runner's high" releasing hormones that suppress pain and cause a feeling of well-being. How about a run or walk around the sea wall followed by a Power yoga class at one of Vancouver's many yoga studios?

Are you living with aches and pains?

Regularly in my practice I meet people who believe they have to "just live" with back pain/knee pain/neck pain etc. Did you know that pain increases our cortisol levels (stress hormone), decreases our energy, and is mentally distracting? Do you remember what it was like before your "bum knee/back/shoulder"? There are often treatments or lifestyle modifications that a health professional can provide to decrease your pain and improve your function.

How healthy is your daily routine?

Activities such as sitting for long periods of time, extended computer use, and carrying your bag (or your child) on the same side, can cause unhealthy postural imbalances. These imbalances build up over time resulting in problems such as low back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, and tennis elbow. It is important to use our bodies symmetrically (try carrying your bag on the other side) and to take breaks if we are sustaining one position for a long period of time. Healthy computer set up is another key to feeling good. Do you know how your mouse, screen and chair should be positioned? If you are unsure how to set up your computer correctly to minimize injury and discomfort, visit our website blog for an article to help you work you're your computer, not against it by setting up your workstation in a healthy way. <http://qiintegratedhealth.com/blog/?p=35>

It is important for us to do a little "clean up" of our health on a regular basis. These questions are only the tip of the iceberg on the many ways we can improve our health. Spring is an excellent time to re-examine what else we can be doing to feel good and stay healthy, so that we can continue to be happy and healthy for many springs to come.

References

Arch Phys Med Rehabil. 2008 Feb;89(2):358-63. Exercisers achieve greater acute exercise-induced mood enhancement than non-exercisers. Hoffman MD, Hoffman DR