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Reducing muscle and Joint pain: it can be a lifestyle choice

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AS a physiotherapist practicing in Euroa I treat musculoskeletal (muscle and joint) pain every day.

Whether it be shoulder, back, neck or elbow pain, much of these complaints can be remedied with healthy lifestyle choices.

Living a healthy lifestyle, such as eating well, exercising regularly, maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, drinking less caffeine and alcohol, and getting optimal sleep has the best evidence for reducing many health-related issues, including joint and muscle pain.

Being active has many well-known benefits to our health in general.

When you are active your joints produce synovial fluid.

This fluid enables normal joint function and plays a role in repairing the joint surfaces from the rigors of daily life.

Without activity your joint surfaces are more likely to degenerate, resulting in osteoarthritis.

Osteoarthritis is where the joint surface breaks down and becomes inflamed, resulting in pain. In order to promote joint and overall health, it is recommended that we do 150 minutes of moderately intense exercise per week (or 30 minutes, 5 days per week).

Good nutrition also plays an important role in managing a healthy system, which improves your ability to overcome and recover from muscle and joint injury.

A typical Western diet is often high in animal protein, refined grains, saturated fat, sugar, and salt.

A poor diet such as this leads to weight gain, leading to joint stress as well as other health related issues, such as cardiovascular disease.

A Mediterranean diet, which consists mainly of vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, cereals, grains, fish and unsaturated fats such as olive oil, has been shown to be beneficial in re-

ducing inflammation, improving your health and your ability to recover from injury and reduce muscle and joint pain.

Smoking is damaging to all tissues in our bodies including our muscle and joints that rely on a good flow of blood and nutrients.

Nicotine from smoking is a strong vasoconstrictor, which means it restricts blood flow to our joints, decreasing nutrition for healing and inhibiting normal joint function.

People who smoke have greater incidence of back pain and interestingly a lower pain threshold.

The amount of sleep we get is another important factor in reducing muscle and joint pain.

A good night's sleep is biologically necessary for restoration of all body systems.

People who suffer from ongoing joint and muscle pain tend to sleep less hours and have interrupted sleep.

Finding a solution to sleeping better is exceedingly difficult for some, but it's important to persevere, as the benefits for improved health from a good night's sleep are evident.

Making healthy lifestyle choices can reduce musculoskeletal pain.

We are fortunate in Euroa that there are many great avenues to creating a healthier lifestyle with an abundance of walking tracks, gyms, studios, and sporting clubs available, as well as access to fresh healthy food.

The choices we make do make a difference.

shirts by Milton, and rugged workwear by Bisley and Hard Yakka.