

BODY MECHANICS

As we all get back into the routine of everyday life....resuming our workouts, getting ready to plant our flowers, and beginning spring cleaning both inside and outside our homes (putting away all the boxes from the holidays, cleaning out the closets, cleaning out the flower beds, placing new plants along the borders, spreading mulch or dirt to fill in areas of the garden, etc)... it is imperative that we remember proper posture and correct techniques while performing these tasks. Prevention in the form of proper mechanics greatly reduces the risk of hurting yourself.

Many patients reported after the holidays that they were so busy that they did not have time to do their exercises. Some reported having increased pain after doing such activities as cooking, wrapping packages, or sitting for long periods and talking to friends and relatives. If we take the time to develop good body mechanics during non-busy times, we establish habits that are automatic during these occasions. Here are some quick tips to begin or reinforce your good habits:

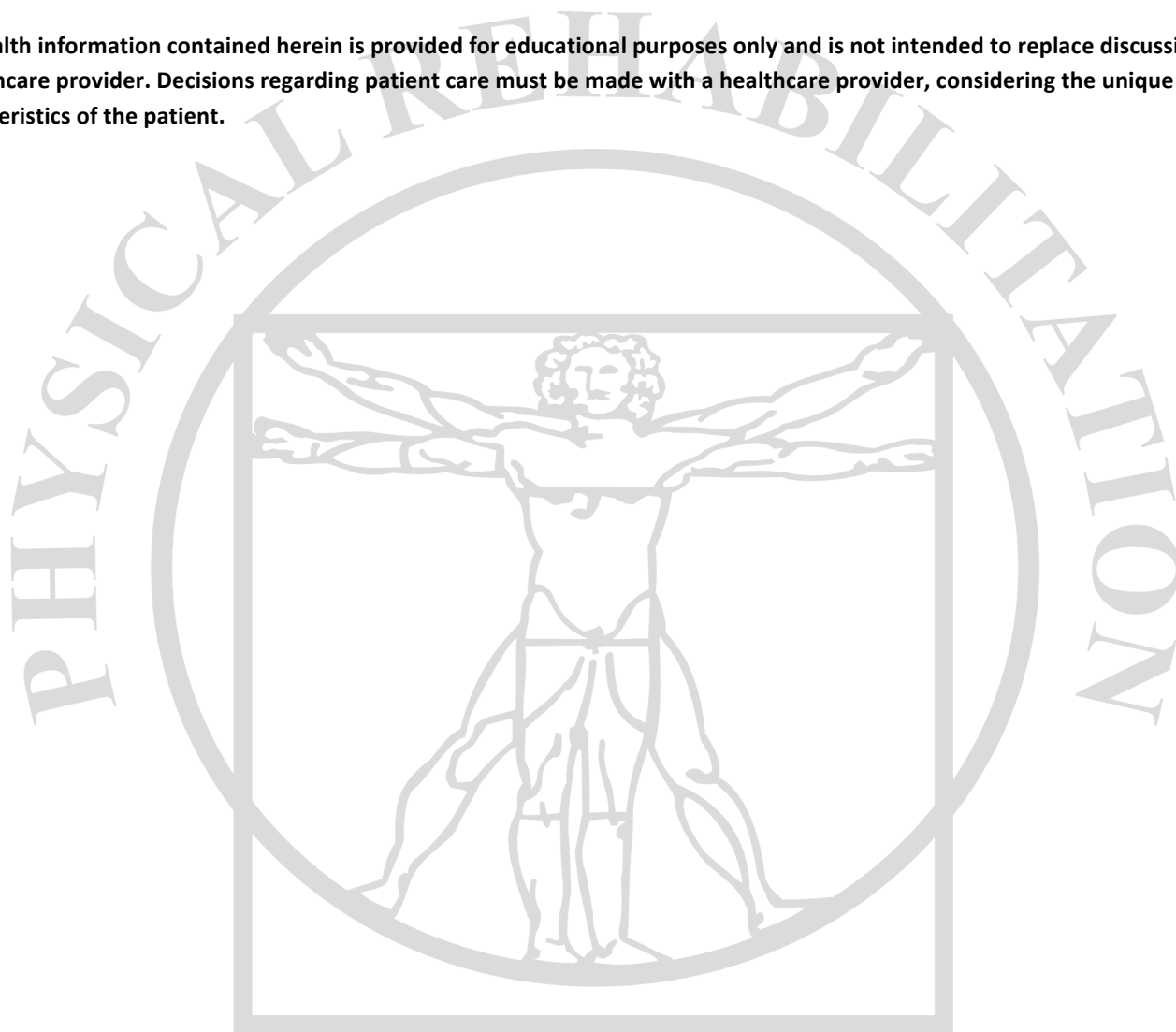
1. Pelvic Tilt to neutral at all times: Anyone who has had an injury and had therapy has heard this phrase, and you might even be hearing our voices cueing you in your heads. Practice doing your pelvic tilt while sitting, lying down, standing in the line at the supermarket, or driving in your car while waiting for the light to turn green. More importantly keep the abdomen engaged when doing any activity, especially strenuous ones.
2. Lifting: Keep your neutral spine, bend your knees and your hips, lift with your legs and not your back, and keep the weight as close to you as you are able. If the object you are lifting is awkward or too big, ask for help. "By lifting with your spine in a vertical position, you direct the force of the weight down through your vertebrae, thus compressing them rather than prying them, and greatly reducing your risk of injury."¹ Remember to lift smoothly and slowly to reduce the stress on the joints and allows time for your muscles to engage properly. ²
3. Twisting: It is important to turn your entire body, especially your hips and feet facing in the direction that you are moving the objects. By minimizing the rotation of the spine, this will decrease the risk of additional stress on the discs between the vertebrae. For those of you that are shoveling out holes for the new plants or moving mulch to save the plants, check your mechanics. Bend your knees while using the shovel, moving your hips forward into the load. Straighten your knees and turn your body in the direction of where you are placing the dirt or mulch. Try not to twist at the waist or use the shoulders to do the full rotation of the shovel. Rotate at the elbows to unload the shovel. Also remember to only take what you can lift on the shovel safely and take breaks as you need. Overloading to hurry up and get the task done may prevent you from enjoying your beautiful garden or other tasks when you are too sore to move.

Hope this helps. And stay healthy...

1. Read more: Proper Upper Body Mechanics in Lifting | eHow.com
http://www.ewh.com/way_5915399_proper-upper-body-mechanics-lifting.html#ixzz3pFubRgTQ

2. Proper mechanics , Gardening Ergonomics <http://www.youcanbenefit.com/ergogard.html>

The health information contained herein is provided for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace discussions with a healthcare provider. Decisions regarding patient care must be made with a healthcare provider, considering the unique characteristics of the patient.



INSTITUTE

Stone Oak Location
19260 Stone Oak Parkway, Suite 107, San Antonio, TX 78258
210.545.9355/fax 210.545.9369

Medical Center Location
5282 Medical Drive, Suite 550, San Antonio, TX 78229
210.593.0774/fax 210.593.0707

www.mypri.net