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# The Connection Between Mental Health and Physical Therapy

Physical discomfort is usually the main focus of a physical therapy appointment. Whether you suffered an injury or have recently undergone surgery, you're doing everything possible to return to the activities you love. But you may not realize that your mental health can majorly impact your physical recovery.

You might think you need to see a mental health professional or start a new prescription to help your mind during recovery, but that's not necessarily the case. Often simply participating in physical therapy can help improve your mental health.

### Reduced Stress, Anxiety, and Depression

As physical therapists, we aim to help you return to your regular lives with few to no restrictions. There may be moments when you feel like nothing will improve after an injury, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel! After meeting with a physical therapist, you'll receive a road map to your recovery. When you see that things will eventually improve, you'll notice improvements in your mental health. Feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression will gradually lessen as you continue on your healing journey.

### Improved Self-Esteem

Unsurprisingly, your self-esteem may take a hit after suffering an injury or losing mobility, but physical therapy can help restore lost confidence. We'll run you through various exercises, and at every appointment, you'll gain a new sense of achievement as you progress toward your goals and regain mobility. Your confidence will improve even more as you work on the exercises we assign you at home.

### Better Sleep

When you don't sleep well, you can experience worsening symptoms of depression and anxiety. There's no better way to ensure you get a good night's rest than by exercising, and that's exactly what we'll help you do. Whether you're coming in for an appointment or are following our guidelines for recovery at home, you'll have an easier time falling asleep at night and will get much better rest.



## Save Your Child From Schoolyard Teasing

### Get Proper Dentistry to Fix ECM!

Welcome back to another episode of "The 4 Biggest Dental Problems to Watch for in Your Kids"! Last month we tackled cavities, and this month I'm excited to dig into a really misunderstood topic: Early Childhood Malocclusion (ECM). If you have a baby OR a little boy or girl with buck teeth, a weak chin, a prominent nose, or teeth that don't line up, then this newsletter is for you.

I know this series is a little technical, but I promise I won't get too in the weeds. I'll only share what you absolutely need to know! First, the basics.

#### Learning About ECM

ECM is a condition where a child's jaws don't grow correctly. Typically their jaws are either the wrong size, in the wrong position, mismatched, or both — and it messes with their teeth! The teeth might look crowded, have extra space between them, or line up strangely when they bite down. There are many different forms of ECM (including excessive spacing, crowding, open bite, overbite, crossbite, underbite, overjet, and abnormal eruption), but two of the most common are overbite and overjet.

#### Overbite vs. Overjet

Have you ever seen a kid whose bottom teeth disappear when they smile because their top teeth are so big and prominent? That's an overbite! Overjet looks pretty similar, except that when you look at the child from the side, you can see that their top jaw is farther forward than their bottom jaw, and their front teeth are tilted outward. To remember the difference, imagine the top teeth as a jet "flying" out over the lower teeth. In both situations, the child's jawbones aren't sitting correctly in their skull.

#### ECM's Dangers for Kids

Not only will ECM ruin a kid's "perfect" smile and bring about teasing at school, but it can also have painful side effects like cavities, gum disease, and ground down, cracked, or broken teeth. This wear and tear happens wherever the child's bite isn't aligned. Teeth that stick up at odd angles are the first to break down and fall out.

ECM can also cause airway issues that bring a cascade of other mental and physical health problems. Remember the way I described overjet? Dentists used to think they could fix it by pushing the upper jaw back (think headgear), but now we've realized that the lower jaw is even *farther* back and what we really need to do is move that jaw forward! When the lower jaw is far back, it reduces the space for the child's tongue and



pushes it backward, blocking their airway and making it hard for them to breathe. Other forms of ECM can cause the same problem.

#### Fixing ECM

ECM may sound scary — and unfortunately, it is! But it's also treatable with the right orthopedics and orthodontics. If your child has ECM, we can figure out precisely what to do to move their jaws forward or back, help their bones grow correctly, and realign their teeth. Of course, it's easier to prevent ECM than cure it. That's why we recommend that parents bring their kids to the dentist even when children are as young as 1 1/2 years old. If we can spot the signs and symptoms of airway problems early, we can get them into orthodontics as early as 3 or 4—instead of waiting for the old guideline of 7 years old—to prevent the worst ECM symptoms. Ongoing evaluation is critical at every age, but the earlier we catch it, the better off the situation will be.

If you have a young child who hasn't been to the dentist yet or think one of your older kids may have ECM, call our office today to book an appointment.

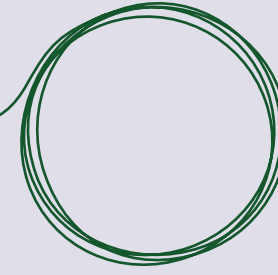
To your great smiles and better health,





## The World Isn't Ending

### 3 Strategies to Reduce Anxiety



When most people think of anxiety, they likely have negative connotations tied to it. Many make the assumption that anxiety will always lead to panic attacks and fears of major change, but just about anything can generate feelings of anxiety, and not all of them are harmful. However, if your anxiety stops you from doing something, it can hinder you almost every day.

In honor of May being National Anxiety Month, here are three ways to reduce your anxiety.

#### Daily Exercise

Physical activity can increase your self-confidence, improve your mood, help you relax, and lower anxiety symptoms. You don't have to do anything

significant — you can go for a walk, take a hike, conduct at-home workouts, go to the gym for at least 30 minutes, or participate in yoga and Pilates.

#### Meditate

Sometimes, taking a step back, focusing on your breathing, and letting your thoughts flow in one ear and out the other can help you put things in perspective. JAMA Internal Medicine published an article stating that practicing mindfulness can help ease feelings of anxiety, depression, and pain. You can meditate by following a guided meditation or silently sitting in a quiet area and breathing slowly. While meditating will be challenging at first, it will become easier with practice.

#### Face Anxiety Head-On

Many people try to avoid anything that could make them feel anxious. While this method may make you feel short-term comfort, it can cause you to be more anxious about specific scenarios. The best strategy to overcome anxiety is to face it head-on. Although it will be uncomfortable and challenging, don't let it stop you! The more you put yourself out there, the less anxious you'll feel. You're stronger than you give yourself credit for!

Please contact your health care provider if you're worried about the anxious feelings you get. They can assist you with identifying your triggers, why anxiety is occurring, and methods you can use to reduce your symptoms.

# OUCH! Pinched Nerves Hurt

## USING PHYSICAL THERAPY TO REDUCE DISCOMFORT

If you have a pinched nerve, you know how much it can affect your day-to-day life. Severe neck or back pain due to a pinched nerve often limits your usual sports or hobbies and can also be aggravated by sitting or standing at work all day with bad posture. But you don't have to be stuck with this pain! The restorative techniques offered in physical therapy can help you treat your pinched nerve and teach you how to manage it properly.

#### Manual Therapy

Who doesn't enjoy a massage? A trained physical therapist can administer manual therapy, such as massages, to loosen muscle tension and ease pain. Some other forms of manual therapy include lymphatic drainage and manual traction. These hands-on techniques can reduce inflammation and improve your range of motion.

#### Cold Laser Therapy

This FDA-approved and noninvasive treatment uses low-level light to heal damaged tissue and relieve nerve pain. The near-infrared light promotes healing and is known to treat pinched nerve symptoms and other spinal injuries, such as temporomandibular joint dysfunction (TMJ) and herniated discs, when done regularly.

#### Restorative Exercise

Don't worry; you won't be doing jumping jacks. Strengthening and range of motion exercises are simple movements that can strengthen your muscles and stretch the affected nerves to help reduce pain. A physical therapist will often assess your issues and unique needs, then customize these exercises for you to reap the most benefits.

#### Retraining Your Posture

No one has perfect posture all of the time, but enhancing it can do wonders for your symptoms. Adjusting your posture is vital to treating pinched nerves and preventing further injury. Most people don't realize how poor their posture is throughout the day, but a physical therapist can help you retrain your stance and improve your spinal alignment. By doing so, you're also preventing further damage to your pinched nerve.



Your favorite activities don't have to become a forgotten memory. Physical therapy can have you returning to your everyday life and managing any discomfort caused by a pinched nerve. While not all physical therapists practice the same methods listed here, they can find a therapeutic routine perfect for your needs. Everyone deserves to live pain-free lives, and physical therapy can help you make the unthinkable a reality.

## The Ageless Benefits of Yoga

### How Seniors Are Finding New Vitality



For many seniors, maintaining an active lifestyle can be a challenge. Your body might not be as flexible as it once was, and new pains or discomforts seem to appear out of nowhere as time passes. This change can be problematic and will require some adjustment on your part, especially if you've lived an active lifestyle. Thankfully, there are some activities you can do to help you stay active, like yoga!

You might think that yoga is just for young people, but that's not the case at all! Yoga is a low-impact exercise that can be modified to suit a wide range of abilities, making it accessible to people of all ages. There is no expectation of perfection, as each individual is

encouraged to listen to their own body and move at a comfortable pace. So even if you have health limitations or concerns, yoga is a safe and pleasant activity. Plus, you'll gain a host of benefits from participating.

By holding poses and moving through sequences, yoga helps to lengthen and stretch muscles, increasing the range of motion and reducing stiffness. You'll also build muscle strength, particularly in your core. Your balance and posture will improve, which will help lessen physical discomfort and reduce your risk of falls.

In addition to physical benefits, yoga is also mentally stimulating. The practice of

yoga can help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. By incorporating breathing techniques into their practice, seniors can improve cognitive function and memory. There's also a social aspect involved. Many yoga studios offer classes specifically for seniors, which can provide a supportive and welcoming environment for everyone to practice together. It's a great way to meet new people and have fun while staying active.

There are advantages for people of all ages to practice yoga. If you've been interested in trying this activity for a while, now is the time to get out and get involved. You may be surprised by how much you enjoy it!

TAKE A  
BREAK!



## Ginger Pork Stir-Fry

Inspired by TasteOfHome.com

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 tbsp cornstarch
- 1 cup orange juice
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 tsp ground ginger
- 1 lb pork tenderloin, cut into thin strips
- 2 tbsp canola oil
- 1 small onion, sliced
- 1/4 lb fresh snow peas
- 1/2 sweet red pepper, julienned
- Cooked rice
- Green onion, chopped (optional)
- Sesame seeds (optional)

#### DIRECTIONS

1. In a small bowl, whisk cornstarch, orange juice, soy sauce, garlic, and ginger until smooth; set aside.
2. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, stir-fry pork in oil until lightly browned, about 4-5 minutes. Remove pork and add onion, peas, and red pepper. Cook until crisp-tender, about 3-5 minutes.
3. Stir in orange juice mixture and pork. Bring to a boil, and then cook until thickened, about 2 minutes. Serve over rice. Garnish with green onion and sesame seeds, if desired.