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OAHU - HAWAII

MAY 2024

### Where is your pain really coming from?

**Have you ever been to see a physiotherapist for pain in one part of your body and when they treated you, they focused on a completely different area? While this can be a strange experience, it can be even more puzzling when the treatment actually works.**

Muscular trigger points can also cause referred pain. The mechanism behind this is a bit trickier to understand, but is thought to be explained by tight bands of muscle tissues that cause pain to be felt in predictable patterns around the body.

When pain is felt at a different location from where the pain is being caused, this is called 'referred pain' and is actually more common than you think. Exactly why this happens is a little complicated, and in fact, we don't yet understand everything about the way that pain is processed.

Adding to this, we know that other tissues of the body can cause pain to be felt in a different location, including discs of the spine and internal organs. Many times the internal organs can refer pain in peculiar patterns and this can actually lead to serious illnesses being mistaken for muscular aches and pains. Kidney pain can be felt in the lower back and tragically, some people fail to recognize that they are having a heart attack because they feel pain in their neck and arm, not in their chest.

Pain is usually felt when something causes damage to the body, sending an electrical impulse to the brain. The brain receives this information and process it to make sense of which part of the body the signal is coming from and what kind of pain it is. When the brain thinks that the pain is coming from a different area than where the damage or signal is actually coming from, this creates the phenomenon of referred pain.

In rare cases, people who have pain in one hand can feel pain just by seeing their other hand moving in a mirror. There are many other fascinating aspects to pain, and understanding how it works is an important part of managing your symptoms.

Sometimes referred pain is easy to explain, such as when a nerve becomes injured or irritated, causing the pain to be felt along the length of the nerve. This often feels like a sharp, burning pain that runs in a strip, along the skin. Other examples of referred pain are more difficult to explain and in some cases seem to defy explanation. Perhaps you have heard about the strange phenomenon of phantom pain where amputees continue to feel pain as though it was in the place where their limbs used to be.

**To understand how referred pain may be affecting you, chat to your physiotherapist who can help with any questions.**



### Brain Teasers

- What coat is best put on wet?
- What disappears as soon as you say its name?
- Why can't you take a picture of a man with a wooden leg?

PHYSIOTIP

**YOU DON'T NEED A DOCTORS REFERRAL TO SEE A PHYSIOTHERAPIST. YOU CAN MAKE AN APPOINTMENT DIRECTLY WITH THE CLINIC.**

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# Focus on Spinal Stenosis

## What is spinal stenosis?

The spinal cord, nerves and arteries are housed by the spine, which acts as a hard electrical casing to support and protect these vulnerable structures. The spine has a hollow column that allows the spinal cord to run from the brain to the rest of the body. At each spinal segment, nerves exit the spine and supply the tissues of the body. There is also an intricate network of small veins and arteries that provide blood to the spinal cord and vertebrae, providing them with the nutrients needed to operate.

Spinal stenosis is characterized by a narrowing of the spaces that house the spinal cord, nerves and blood supply. A variety of factors can cause spinal stenosis, however overwhelmingly it is caused by degenerative changes to the spine as we age. Many people over the age of 60 will have spinal stenosis; however, not all will have pain. Clinically, spinal stenosis is used to describe the painful symptoms of this condition rather than just the narrowing itself.

## What are the symptoms?

Pain with walking or standing that radiates into the hips, thighs and even feet is the hallmark of spinal stenosis. Usually, this pain will be reduced with rest and forward movements of the spine. Spinal stenosis is a progressive condition and symptoms will gradually increase over time. The pain is often described as a deep radiating ache and can be associated with fatigue, heaviness, weakness and numbness. It can affect just one leg, however more often will be felt in both legs. There will often be associated back pain; however, leg pain is usually the most severe complaint.

## How can physiotherapy help?

There are many conditions that need to be excluded before a diagnosis can be made. Your physiotherapist is able to conduct a thorough examination and accurately diagnose this condition. In some cases, imaging may be requested. As mentioned earlier, many people have stenotic spinal changes without symptoms. Surgery to decompress the restricted nerves and stabilize the spine are used in very severe cases.

For mild to moderate cases of spinal stenosis, physiotherapy can be

extremely beneficial. Your physiotherapist can help you manage your pain through hands-on techniques and by providing a targeted exercise program based on biomechanical assessment. They are also able to help you to understand and manage your day in a way that helps to reduce flare-ups and maintain muscle strength.

If surgery is the right choice for you, your physiotherapist is able to guide you through this treatment pathway, helping you to prepare and recover from surgery to get the best outcome possible.

**None of the information in this newsletter is a replacement for proper medical advice. Always see a medical professional for advice on your individual condition.**



Answers: 1. A coat of paint 2. Silence. 3. Wooden legs don't take photos

## Sweet Potato & Cheese Fritters

### Ingredients:

- 2 Medium Sweet Potatoes
- 1/2 cup grated Cheddar Cheese
- 2 Large Eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 clove of crushed Garlic
- 2 Tbsp. Olive Oil
- 1/2 Tbsp. Cumin Powder
- 1 Tbsp. Salt & Pepper
- 1 Tbsp. fresh chives
- Tomato salsa for dipping



1. Peel sweet potatoes and grate them into small pieces. Preheat the oven to 200 °C and line a baking tray with foil and spray.
2. Place grated sweet potatoes and cheddar cheese in a bowl along with eggs, salt, garlic and pepper and mix together gently.
3. When mixed thoroughly, use a tablespoon to scoop out small amounts and roll into to small balls.
4. Place the balls onto the baking tray and brush over or spray with olive oil. Bake for 15-20 minutes or until golden brown.
5. Garnish with chives and add salsa for dipping.

**Allow to cool and serve while still warm.**



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