



Would your Body pass a MOT?

Luke Barden, May 2014

After last month speaking about overcoming obstacles and the importance of preparation, I thought we could expand on this topic somewhat with preventative training.

One of the obstacles I mentioned was injury. But what if, instead of recovering from injuries, we actively prevented them?

We all consider ourselves 'fit' when we are training regularly, and by extension when you are 'fit' you are 'healthy'.

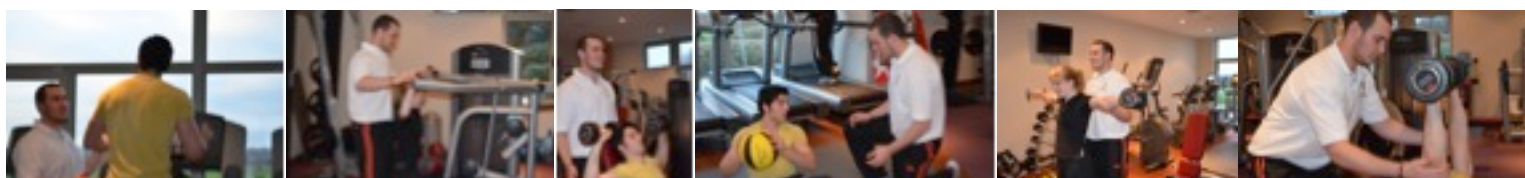
This may not always be the case. If you look at professionals in almost any sporting discipline they may have routines and habits that are missing from your own schedule.

There are some circumstances in which injury cannot be prevented, impacts for example, from falls, contact sports etc. But pulled muscles, and weak joints allowing repeating injuries to occur can be avoided.

The requirements are not excessive; some do however come with a cost. Another limiting factor could be the amount of time you have to dedicate to this, on top of your normal exercise schedule.

In Training

1. A thorough warm-up will increase fluids in the joints, blood flow to the area you will be working, and physically warm the muscles you are using, which will increase their flexibility and elasticity. (It is important to note, that if you wish to stretch before a workout, you should ALWAYS be warm before you carry out the stretches!! Never ever stretch when you are totally cold, as this in itself can cause injury.)
2. Correct technique, for example, when squatting, deadlifting, or running, will prevent unnecessary wear and tear on the joints and allow maximum efficiency from the muscles being used. This spreads the load so the body can lift/move how it has been designed to.
3. Working with the full range of motion is important when doing exercises, as it ensures there are not 'weak areas' in the movement, where the muscle may be unused to working and could strain itself when one day required to work from that position.
4. Joint stabilisation will ensure the joints, and the ligaments, tendons and muscles in and around them are strong and healthy. Doing any exercise will aid in stabilising a joint. However there are specific exercises that will be highly beneficial when looking to stabilise a particular area, e.g. the ankle, knee or shoulder.
5. Consistent training will ensure your body is kept in peak performance. Taking a week, or multiple weeks off will mean your body is more prone to being in an unprepared state. It can also cause problems if you try to lift a weight you used to be able to lift, and your body has lost some of its strength.
6. Thoroughly stretching out at the end of a workout will both open up the muscle for blood flow, which will increase recovery efficiency, and prevent the muscles from tightening up, which can cause problems for the tight muscles themselves, and the opposing muscles, which are stretched to accommodate the tight muscle's pulling.

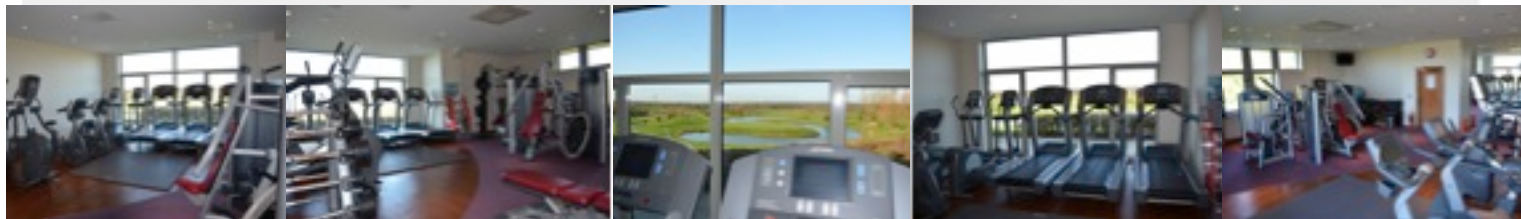


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Outside of Training

1. Your nutrition is important, as adequate protein in your diet will allow your muscles to recover faster and more fully
2. Your sleep patterns will determine how rested and recovered you are after your previous workout. This, like nutrition, will aid in ensuring muscles are ready for their next workout.
3. Active recovery, such as using a foam roller or if you can afford it, getting a sports massage. These are vital to remove any built up knots in the muscle. Knots can occur for multiple reasons, and you don't have to have done anything wrong to get them. But you should not ignore them, as they will become more painful when the muscle works, and when you have them massaged out.

These are the steps that the pros take in order to avoid injury and keep on top of their games to be able to deliver peak performance every time.

As mentioned above, circumstances may prevent you from being able to partake in all these steps, and as frequently as they do, but going for a sports massage when you can, or seeing a chiropractor for example to check your spinal health, could help you spot an injury in the making, and avoid it.

It is these preventative steps that will allow you to maintain your body in an injury free and truly healthy status that can provide years of training or sports performance without major setbacks or injuries.

Obviously accidents can happen to anyone, but good form when lifting, and thorough stretching as a very minimum can do the world of good for your joints, which by the way, are designed to way outlast your lifetime when used correctly!! So you should never need hip, knee or any other joint replacement, if you use the ones you were born with right!

(Unless you run a marathon...as the huge amount of running on concrete required can be enough to damage the hips. But this damage will still be reduced if you have the correct technique.)

