



Fit For Sisters

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Columnist

What is adaptive muscle shortening?

Adaptive muscle shortening is an ominous sounding condition, but it's arguable everybody reading this has had an instance of or is dealing with this muscle-tightening condition.

Tight muscles, strains, and pains all are outcomes when adaptive muscle shortening occurs. This leads to undesirable posture, poor movement mechanics, and eventually more dysfunction. It is a slippery slope and needs to be addressed with some simple yet thoughtful consideration.

Adaptive muscle shortening is the principle that a muscle will autonomously shorten to the position it's held in most. This means those tight neck, chest, and shoulders are a result of forward "slumped" posture. (Grandma knew best!) Tight hips and hamstrings? Sitting is likely the culprit.

The drivers behind this are two sensory neurons within the muscles called the golgi tendon organ and the muscle spindles. These sense movement, the position of the muscle and allow for stretching, contracting,

and tension to take place. They adapt to the positioning they're frequently in. These are also what relax when you stretch, giving the sensation of "muscle lengthening."

You might be drawing the conclusion that stretching is the remedy. Yes, that's partially correct; however, you also need active range-of-motion exercises. This is because contracting and relaxing a muscle results in a greater inhibitory response on these two neurons. Active range of motion also works the muscle and therefore is a great way to succeed in two endeavors: stretching and activating.

Adaptive muscle shortening in context of aging typically looks like this: You adopt a forward head and shoulder posture; you begin to lean forward in a hunchback stance. This forward lean puts momentum during a stride too far over your center of gravity. Absent youthful light-footedness, you shuffle your feet, slowing down your gait and greatly increasing risks of tripping. Straining lower back muscles become painful, and very tight. Soon you're not moving as much and become increasingly sedentary.

Movement is key; be intuitive about how posture and daily habits help — or inhibit — proper posture. Use exercise as a therapy, and adopt good habits. Recognize the activity (such as cycling, or reading) which put you in a scrunched position for long periods, and work in the contrary. Adaptive muscle shortening might be something everyone is susceptible to, but suffering dire consequences isn't inevitable.

Teens push for lowering voting age

By Sarah Zimmerman
Associated Press

SALEM (AP) — Hundreds of teens spent their spring break pleading with Oregon state lawmakers to consider lowering the voting age to 16, saying young people deserve a say on issues that will directly shape their future including gun control and global climate change.

"The decisions our election officials make now will affect us for the rest of our lives, which is why we need a say," Jeremy Clark, a 14-year-old from Portland, testified on Wednesday. "We are tired of waiting for the adults to take action."

Legislators are considering changing the state constitution to lower the voting age to 16 in all elections, including for federal office. The move would ultimately need approval from voters in the 2020 ballot.

Teens around the country have emerged as a powerful political force since a school shooting at Parkland, Florida, that left 17 students and teachers dead. Students have since staged multiple school walk-outs calling for more gun control, and have separately staged political demonstrations demanding action on climate change.

The idea to lower the voting age has picked up some national support, gaining the endorsement of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. A push to lower the voting age on the

federal level fell short earlier this month.

The move to lower the voting age in Oregon also has the approval of Democratic Gov. Kate Brown and U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer.

"Sixteen-year-olds are legally permitted to work, required to pay income tax on their earnings, permitted to drive motor vehicles on their own, and can be tried as adults in the criminal justice system," Blumenauer said in written testimony. "It stands to reason that they should be able to shape their future by participating in the political process as well."

But opponents say that teens aren't mature enough to understand the political process, and that they're too young to own property or enlist in the military. Republicans add that the move is a Democratic bid to get more liberal voters.

"People are not legally considered adults in this country until they are 18 years old, and I believe they shouldn't be able to vote until then either," said Oregon Senate

Republican Leader Herman Baertschiger, Jr., of Grants Pass. "This is nothing more than an attempt to expand the voter rolls to sway elections."

The 26th amendment to the U.S. Constitution lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 in 1971. While states cannot raise the minimum voting age, they can lower it in state and local elections. Thirteen states have introduced measures to let teens vote, though none have passed.

Two Maryland cities, Takoma Park and Hyattsville, let 16-year-olds vote in city council elections.

Oregon is one of 14 states to let 16-year-olds pre-register to vote, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. At least 195,500 young people pre-registered in the state since the program began in 2007, with nearly half of them pre-registering between 2016 and 2018. At least 18,800 of those pre-registered voters who turned 18 before the 2018 midterm elections cast a ballot, according to a report from the Center for American Progress.

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