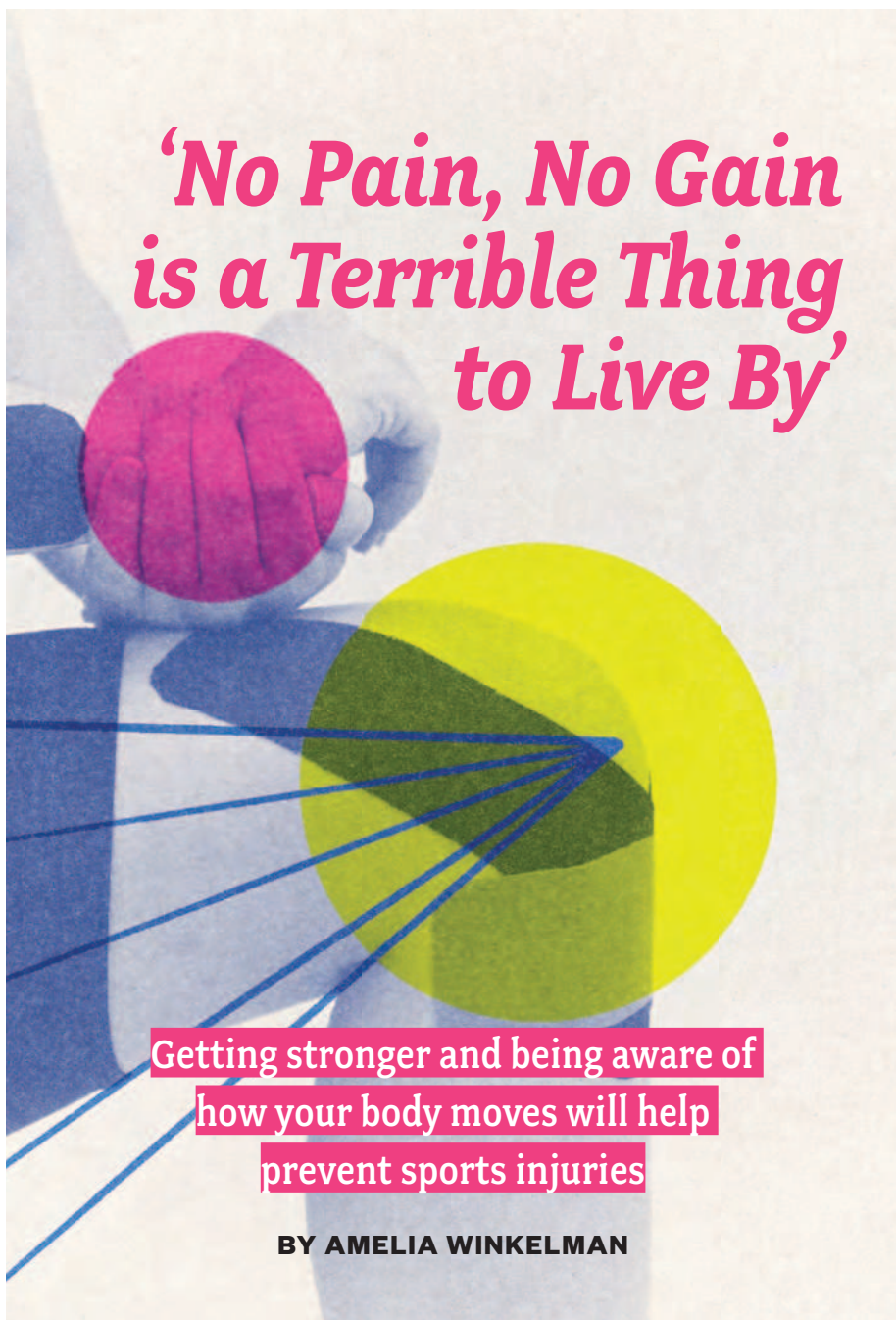




‘No Pain, No Gain is a Terrible Thing to Live By’

Getting stronger and being aware of how your body moves will help prevent sports injuries

BY AMELIA WINKELMAN

Photo by Maksim Goncharov

To put it simply, injuries suck. It’s miserable to injure yourself doing something you love, and it’s infuriating to do it while exercising simply to take care of your body. Sports injuries are painful, inconvenient, frustrating, uncomfortable and another handful of negative adjectives, but they are also often avoidable.

Read on for advice from two physical therapists on preventing musculoskeletal injuries. Both emphasized that many

musculoskeletal (muscle, joint and ligament) injuries are related to a lack of muscular capacity and to moving improperly.

First, “As a general rule, people need to get stronger,” says Dr. Ryan Wiser, a provider at Tensegrity Physical Therapy in downtown Eugene.

The other major way to prevent and improve sports injuries is to improve the mechanics of how a person performs their sport, Wiser says. He says Tensegrity works

with patients on both aspects.

When starting a new activity, it is best to start slow, says Dr. Jammie Hoberg, a physical therapist and orthopedic certified specialist at PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center RiverBend.

“The most important thing to remember is that ‘no pain, no gain’ is a terrible thing to live by,” Hoberg says. “If something is hurting, then the person should stop.”

Working through pain makes injuries worse, she says.

“If you’re trying to build muscle, then you should get the burning discomfort within your muscles,” she says. “But if you’re having sharp pain, if it’s radiating anywhere else in your body, or if it doesn’t go away within a few days, that’s not healthy.”

Anyone who moves is at risk of musculoskeletal injuries, but repetitive movements like running, or even using a keyboard all day, can make these injuries more likely, Wiser says.

That means people who play sports like soccer and basketball can be more vulnerable to sports injuries because of the repetitive stress of accelerating, decelerating and cutting, Wiser says.

Good mechanics are also essential for preventing injury in the gym, he says. Working out on machines is generally safer than free weights because they keep the body in alignment, he continues. With weightlifting in general, you need to be mindful of your muscle capacity and only lift a little bit beyond it if you’re trying to get stronger, Wiser says.

People who are new to weightlifting can start by improving their muscular capacity on the machines and then move to free weights if they want to, Wiser says.

Many people have extremely weak hip muscles, he says, which contributes to a plethora of injuries, including low back, hip and knee pain. “One of the things we know is ankle sprains, for instance, which are very common, are highly, highly correlated with weakness in the hips,” Wiser says.

Most people’s hip muscles — which are technically their gluteal muscles — are so weak that they don’t even know how to engage them, Wiser says. “So we find compensatory movement, compensatory muscles to use,” he says. “For example,

we’ll use our hamstrings instead of our glutes to move our hips.”

Part of this weakness comes from sitting too much, which is very common in the demands of everyday life, Wiser says. Wiser recommends that people stretch the front of their hips, the hip flexors. They’re the only part of the body that is hard to over stretch.

There are exceptions to everything, but hamstrings and calves generally don’t need much stretching, depending on your sport, Wiser says. For sports that cause tissue strain, including ones that involve a lot of running, stretching after exercise puts further strain on the tissue, he says.

Avoid static stretches before exercise as well. Instead opt for dynamic movements that get blood moving and warm up your range of motion, Wiser says. Static stretches are holding the same position for a set amount of time.

Static stretching your body can expand its motion, but that’s not always a good thing, Wiser says. For example a runner who stretches their calves a lot may end up with more motion in their calves. They will likely use that extra motion when running and risk exceeding their capacity, he says.

Overall, be gentle on your body. Don’t overlook rest days, Hoberg says. The general rule is two days for each muscle group. After leg day, wait 48 hours before doing leg day again, she says.

“If you don’t give your body time to recover, then you’re, again, more likely to get an injury,” Hoberg says.



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