

### Helping to relieve lower back pain

Pilates is a form of exercise that has been brought increasingly to the general public's attention due to its popularity with celebrities. It was devised by Joseph Pilates about 70 years ago and was the culmination of his personal experiences with a variety of exercise and sports.

The traditional pilates exercises have been modified over the years by pilates training schools and physiotherapists as some of the exercises are of a high level and difficult to execute correctly. This has led to the development of the contemporary approach to pilates. The essence of the exercises remain constant and focuses on the recruitment of the deep postural stabilising muscles of the abdominal wall and spine, but also of those surrounding the shoulder blades.

Over the past 20 years research led by physiotherapists into the subject of low back pain and muscle rehabilitation has overlapped with pilates. The research supports some of the principles of pilates in the reduction of LBP. Hence pilates is used and often recommended by physiotherapists today.

On a practical note it is important to learn pilates from a well qualified teacher. There is no country-wide standard for pilates but I have listed below the websites of well recognised training qualifications in the UK.

Pilates is best learned on a one-to-one basis and has the added benefits for those experiencing pain if the teacher has a physiotherapy background. This is particularly useful in people who have a history of back pain or back surgery. Once the basic principles of pilates have been learned on a one-to-one basis, it is then easier for the person to integrate into a class situation and execute the exercises safely and correctly.

*Stephanie Stock is a Chartered Physiotherapist and qualified Stott Pilates Instructor*

Links: [www.stottpilates.com](http://www.stottpilates.com), [www.bodycontrol.co.uk](http://www.bodycontrol.co.uk), [www.polestarpilates.com](http://www.polestarpilates.com)

Physio Solutions Clinic · 23 Baron St · Islington · London N1 9ET  
T: 020 7713 7780 · F: 020 7713 7323 · E: [info@physiosolutions.co.uk](mailto:info@physiosolutions.co.uk)  
W: [www.physiosolutions.co.uk](http://www.physiosolutions.co.uk)

Massage therapy appointments, please call Clare Murphy on 07980 580488

#### Opening Hours

Mon-Thurs: 8:30am-7:30pm Fri: 8:30am-5:00pm Sat: 9:00am-1:00pm



### Clinic News

It's been a busy and exciting summer here at Physio Solutions.

Daniel was delighted to be chosen as one of two physios travelling with the GB judo team for the German Open International Judo Championship in Stuttgart. This was a week's training event followed by the competition over the weekend and the players kept him very busy with predominantly neck, shoulder and elbow injuries.



Kasia also was travelling - she went to Switzerland as sole physiotherapist with the UK Disabled Athletics Squad. In spite of a small team of eight athletes they had major success winning 21 medals, including 13 golds, giving the UK top ranking. UK Athletics are building up a very strong Paralympics squad in preparation for London 2012.

As for the home front, I've been on two courses, an advanced ergonomics update hence this month's topic and a spinal manipulation review. It was therefore heartening to see NICE's recently published guidelines for low back pain treatment recommending acupuncture, exercise programmes and manipulation, all of which we offer here at the clinic.

All the best,  
**Helen Skehan,**  
Practice Principal

#### In this issue:

- ♦ Healthy ideas for the Computer User
- ♦ Pilates

### Update for Computer Users

Most computer users are aware of the importance of a well-set up workstation to minimise the risk of suffering a work-related injury (more formally known as work related musculo-skeletal disorder (WRMSDs or RSI). But what exactly is a well set-up work-station? This is a difficult question to answer even for an expert.

There is still a lack of good research with clear results that can be applied to the majority of PC users. However evidence from recent research has questioned some of the conventional wisdom such as setting the screen at eye level and not using arm supports while keying.

#### Where should the screen be placed?

**Previous general advice:** The top of the screen should be placed at eye level.

**Current research findings:** It is recommended that the screen is positioned at a minimum of 10cms below eye level.

**Why:** Eye symptoms are very common in PC users, the major symptom being dry eyes. During all VDU work the eye dries out because of prolonged staring at the screen and the reduction in the frequency of blinking. Recent evidence has pointed to setting the screen lower to minimise this effect and lessening the amount the eye has to open.

#### Should I rest my arms whilst keying?

**Previous general advice:** No.

**Current research findings:** Yes.

**Why:** Having space to support your forearms whilst using a computer can lessen the load on your neck and upper limbs. The traditional 'floating' posture in which a neutral wrist posture is maintained without supporting the arms has been proposed as one of the causal factors of neck, shoulder arm and hand problems. There is also now some evidence that arm supports can have a positive effect on upper limb symptoms.

#### Choose the right keyboard

Keyboards vary greatly in size, position of keys and the stiffness and distance of travel of the individual keys. Computer users with symptoms have been shown in one study to hit the keys significantly harder than individuals without symptoms. Choosing the right keyboard can in certain cases help significantly with user comfort and improvement of symptoms.



#### What mouse?

Recent mouse studies found a central mouse position to provide the best posture for the upper limbs and a roller bar mouse to reduce muscle activity. Some slanting mice can reduce muscle activity in certain muscle groups.

With constant changes in technology, screen dimensions, input devices and methods of working it is important not to impose the 'one size fits all' approach to work-station organisation.

Where a computer user is having problems or suffering discomfort a multifaceted approach based on a thorough individual assessment is usually required. This includes detailed ergonomic job analysis, identification of risk factors, definition of causes, and posture and movement analysis. Solutions can range from administrative changes, equipment provision, postural adaptations to behavioural modifications.

*Physio Solutions offers work-station assessments for individuals or groups. For further information, please contact the clinic.*