

Serving the local community since 2001

# Back in Shape



## Physiotherapy & Pilates



### Helen's Pilates

**Term dates: 2018 Term 4**

Start: Monday 8 October  
End: Monday 17 December

#### Alphington Bowls Club

##### All ages and abilities classes

Mon: 12-1pm & \*7-8pm\*  
Wed: \*5.30-6.30pm\*  
Fri: 9.15-10.15am & 10.30-11.30am  
Cost: Mon, Wed & Fri: 10-week term:  
\$200 or \$25/class casual

#### Fairfield Community Room

##### Over 50s class

Mon: 9.30-10.15am  
Cost: 10-week term: \$100 or \$12/  
class casual

##### Limited mobility class

Mon: 10.30-11.15am  
Cost: 10-week term: \$100 or \$12/  
class casual

#### PUBLIC HOLIDAY ALERT:

There will be no classes on Monday 5  
November - Melbourne Cup Eve

### Tim's Pilates

Call Tim for information on 0410 010818

These classes are ongoing until 17 Dec,  
even during term breaks. \*Classes\* are  
Helen's classes that Tim will continue  
through the breaks. All are welcome.

#### Alphington Bowls Club

Mon: 6-7pm & \*7-8pm\*  
Wed: \*5.30-6.30pm\*  
Cost: \$15/class

#### Venue to be confirmed

Wed: 6.45-7.45pm  
Cost: \$15/class

## How long do you have to live?

Recent research shows that three simple exercise tests can predict whether or not we are at risk from premature death. This research has been published in a number of well-respected publications, including the British Medical Journal (BMJ), and has also featured in TV documentaries such as one by medical journalist Dr Michael Mosely.

The background to the study involved tracking 5,000 people born in 1946 throughout their lives. At the age of 53—in 1999—each of the test participants completed three simple tests during home visits by specially trained nurses. These people continued to be monitored after the tests and correlations were made between those who had performed poorly in the tests and those who died prematurely.

The three tests were very simple: firstly, a measurement of how long each test subject could stand on one leg with his/her eyes closed; secondly, a measurement of how many times in a minute each test subject could stand up from sitting on a straight-back chair—like a typical dining room chair—to a standing locked-knee position and return to a seated position; and thirdly, a measurement of grip strength using a handgrip dynamometer.

The results of all three tests were combined into a single score for each individual, and these scores compared with that person's subsequent longevity. Those with the lowest scores were calculated to be five times more likely to die within 13 years than those who performed well.

In case you would like to know how you would fare in these tests, here are the general figures for what constitutes a good and a bad score for each. For the balance test, the healthiest men and women were able to stand on one leg with their eyes closed for longer than 10 seconds, while the least healthy—and those with the highest measured risk of dying early—could only manage to balance for three seconds.

With the chair test, the healthiest men managed 39 repetitions in a minute and the healthiest women achieved 36. The least healthy men only completed 22 reps and the least healthy women just 21.

For the grip strength test, the dynamometer gives a reading in kilograms. The healthiest men achieved a squeeze of 54.5kg and the least healthy managed 47.8kg. The healthiest women achieved a score of 33.9kg and the least healthy 27.9kg.

Of course, the exact mechanism by which this



correlation works has not been identified. Correlation is not necessarily causation after all, so it would be incorrect to say those with weak quads, or those with a poor sense of balance, or those with arthritis in their hands are destined for a premature death. However, as markers of general health, there does seem to be something about the abilities of an individual to perform these tests well that provides a useful overview for general health and fitness.

It is pretty easy to perform the balance and chair test yourselves, although the grip test would involve locating a dynamometer. If you find you score poorly in any of the tests, my suggestion would be not to be too disheartened, but to use the information to work on the specific skills necessary to help you improve your score.

For example, my Active Standing Exercise in this issue will help you get started with improving your balance, and you'll probably be pleasantly surprised by how quickly you improve. Likewise with the chair test, just by performing this test on a regular basis, you will improve your strength in the various muscle groups that will help you achieve a better score. And the more you perform the handgrip test, the stronger your grip will become.

So whatever your current level of health and fitness, these simple exercise could help you improve your strength, endurance and balance. I would not suggest for a moment that performing these tests and training to improve your score is guaranteed to make you live longer, but I can guarantee that by improving your performance in these tests, you will undoubtedly feel better and enjoy an enhanced quality of life!

## Active Standing Exercises

'Active Upright Exercises' can be performed anywhere you find yourself standing and waiting. So don't just stand there: get active!

### Finding the balance

Loss of balance is one of the indicators of ageing, and improving your balance can help you feel younger and more healthy. You should challenge your balance wherever you can, the more often the better. Try this exercise when standing in a queue, or when you are talking on the phone or even cleaning your teeth or doing the dishes:

- Stand up tall with your feet hip-distance apart and with your arches lifted
- Your knees should also be hip-distance apart, slightly bent and with your kneecaps pointing straight ahead
- Tuck in your chin and imagine a cord attached to the crown of your head that somebody is gently pulling
- Focus on a distant point at eye level
- Lift one foot off the ground, although if you find this too challenging you can keep the tip of your big toe on the ground
- Use your arms to help you balance, and if necessary you can touch a wall or chair top with your fingertips to minimise the wobbles
- Time yourself to see how long you can hold this position for on either side
- Once you get to 60 seconds, you can start to add an extra challenge by slowly swing your arms forward and back



## RIP: Tottie Mavis White

6 April 1922 - 4 July 2018

Sadly, Tottie passed away on 4 July 2018 at the grand age of 96. An inspiration to us all, Tottie was still coming to my Pilates 'Limited Mobility Class' until she was 95. She was unrelentingly cheerful and interested in everyone and everything around her and always up for a laugh. I like to think that the Pilates helped keep her young at heart, and helped her maintain a good quality of life until the end. She will be missed by everyone who knew her.



## Osteoporosis update

You may remember that in July 2017 I had a DEXA bone-density scan and was shocked to find I had a T-Score of -2.5 in my lumbar spine which is the threshold score for Osteoporosis, and -1.5 in my hips which is a diagnosis for Osteopaenia.

I have just had the test repeated and found the scores are now -1.9 and -1.1 for my lumbar spine and hips respectively. While still in the Osteopaenia range, both results show improvement and indicate that Osteoporosis might not be as irreversible as we once thought.

So how have I achieved this medical miracle? I started taking a Vitamin D supplement as my levels were low, and I took up running. Running is not a natural activity for me, as I prefer lower impact alternatives such as cycling, swimming, walking, yoga and Pilates, but I started gently with 4x30 second bouts within a 20-minute walk, three times a week. After a month, I increased this to 4x60 second intervals, and after 10 months was able to run continuously for 20 minutes. I now run 5km in 30 minutes, three times a week, and actually enjoy it!

If you have been diagnosed with either Osteoporosis or Osteopaenia and think that running might be the answer, please come and see me for further advice.

