

Serving the local community since 2001

Back in Shape



Physiotherapy & Pilates



Helen's Mat Classes

Term dates: 2021 Term 2

Start: Monday 19 April 2021

End: Friday 25 June 2021

Alphington Bowls Club

Parkview Rd, Alphington

All ages and abilities classes

Mon: 12-1pm & 7-8pm

Wed: 5.30-6.30pm (Zoom only)

Fri: 9.15-10.15am & 10.30-11.30am

Cost: Mon: 9-week term: \$225

Wed: 10-week term: \$250

Fri: 10-week term: \$250

There will be no casual attendance initially in order to regulate class sizes. However, all participants will have access to the Wednesday class Zoom recording online at no additional cost.

St. Andrews Uniting Church

85 Gillies Street, Fairfield

These classes were formerly held at the Fairfield Community Centre.

Over 50s class

Mon: 9.30-10.20am

Cost: 9-week term: \$126

Limited mobility class

Mon: 10.30-11.20am

Cost: 9-week term: \$126

There will be no casual attendance initially in order to regulate class sizes. However, I will be experimenting with live Zoom recording of these classes for anybody unable to attend in person. These Zoom recordings will be available to all class participants online at no additional cost.

PUBLIC HOLIDAY ALERT:

There will be no class
on the Queen's Birthday
on Monday 14 June 2021

Sleeping your way to success

I'm sure I'm not alone in feeling that through my adult life, I've never quite managed to get enough sleep. As a student, my social life competed with the need to sleep, and then as a young parent my children seemed to conspire against me ever feeling fully rested. And now, the challenges of a busy work and home life, a partner who has different sleep patterns to myself—not to mention menopause symptoms—still mean that the magical eight hours remains more of a myth than a reality.

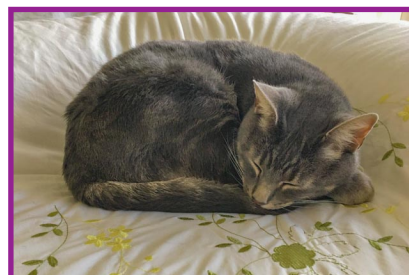
A recent documentary on SBS by Michael Mosley, *"The Truth About Sleep"* suggests that adults need between seven and eight hours and adolescents need nine hours a day. Worryingly, over the last 60 years the amount of sleep we are getting on average as a nation has dropped by 1-2 hours!

So why are we not getting enough? Quite simply, it is because of our lifestyles: we are working longer and more antisocial hours than ever before; we have more screen distractions from our electronic devices and social media; and there is a greater social expectation to do more in less time.

More people suffer from insomnia than a generation ago: estimated to affect one in three Australians. The term 'insomnia' encompasses a range of sleep disturbances from snoring to sleep apnoea, difficulties falling asleep to problems staying asleep, and even the need to have a pee in the night. Many instances of insomnia today are linked to our difficulty in adequately 'switching off' from the stimuli of our lives, but recent studies also indicate that our DNA might have a similarly important role to play with how much—or how little—sleep we are getting.

So how can we tell if we are getting enough sleep? You could try the 'sleep latency' test. This involves lying down mid afternoon and seeing how long it takes to fall asleep. If you hold a spoon over a metal tray, you can time how long it takes from the moment you close your eyes to the instance that you fall asleep and are woken by the sound of the spoon clattering onto the tray. Anything over 15 minutes indicates you are getting enough sleep, but anything under 10 minutes shows you are sleep deprived.

Sleep is a complicated subject, and scientists are still not entirely sure what the body is actually achieving when we are asleep. However, the scientific community is in agreement that sleeping isn't optional; it's as vital to our wellbeing as nutrition and exercise.



During the 'deep sleep' part of the cycle, our brains are laying down memories and removing toxins. If these processes are interrupted, it can affect the parts of the brain responsible for memory, language and our sense of time. Cumulative sleep deprivation can lead to a range of age-related type illnesses, including dementia, Type-2 diabetes, obesity, immunity deficiencies, hearing loss and high blood pressure.

I have also noticed during my 39 years as a physio that there is a significant correlation between patients who report tight, painful muscles and who also complain of poor sleep, often experiencing cramps or restless legs. It is not clear whether tight muscles contribute to poor sleep, or whether poor sleep leads to tighter muscles, but there is a clear link in my experience.

Many of those patients go on to report improved sleep—both in quality and duration—once I have helped them overcome their immediate muscle issues. I believe that if we do not reach the 'deep sleep' stage when very little movement occurs, then our muscles are not able to fully relax and over time whole muscle groups become progressively tighter.

So don't neglect those aching muscles. Call your physio today to book a treatment. You'll enjoy a better night's rest as a result, and gain all the other health benefits that good sleep will give you.

Active Standing Exercises

'Active Standing Exercises' are exercises you can perform anywhere at any time when you are on your feet with a few minutes to kill, so long as you don't mind a few curious looks from other people. For example, when you are standing in a supermarket queue you no longer need to feel as though your time is being wasted. So don't just stand there. Stand actively!

Single-leg quarter squat progression

This is a progression from last term's Active Standing exercise and aims to continue to challenge and improve our whole lower leg alignment.

- Stand tall with your full weight on your left leg, keeping your left heel on the ground and your left arch lifted, with your left kneecap pointing straight ahead.
- Steady your balance with your right big toe touching the ground.
- Put your hands on your hips and aim to keep your pelvis level and symmetrical throughout the exercise.
- Bend your left knee and at the same time tap your right toe forward.
- As you straighten your knee, tap your right big toe back to the start position.
- Once you can achieve this movement with good alignment of the left leg, progress by tapping your right big toe forward, as before, then out to the side and then behind.
- Repeat these movements standing on your right leg and moving your left leg.



A good night's sleep

Some simple strategies

There are a number of easy practical solutions that we can do to achieve better sleep. We are governed by an internal body clock—a light sensor in our hypothalamus—and we sleep best when this is attuned properly to the dawn/dusk cycle.

As such, your bodies respond best when the rising sun wakes us and when we get plenty of natural daylight in the morning. Incorporating a morning walk into your routine works well here.

Avoiding artificial light in favour of natural light wherever possible is also a good idea. Tied in with this is the avoidance of the artificial light we get from screens and electronic devices, especially in that period before bed. Seriously consider removing all electronic devices from the bedroom and avoiding their use an hour before bedtime.

A bath an hour before bedtime also helps prepare us for sleep, especially if you go to a cool room after your bath. We sleep better in general in a warm bed in a cool room.

Avoid caffeine after midday, and limit alcohol to just one glass. While alcohol may assist in falling asleep, the quality of sleep will be worse than without.

An evening meal rich in fibre, such as lentils, chickpeas or beans—or taking a pre-biotic supplement—will improve your gut health, while providing your healthy gut bacteria with the food they need to produce short-chain fatty acids that have been proven to help us sleep.

And as covered in the main article, looking after our muscles will also improve sleep. Exercise will help us feel naturally tired, but over-exercise may lead to tight muscles that will prevent us from sleeping well. In these circumstances, a stretching program will help prevent muscle tightness from starting, but if you already have muscle tightness, then regular massage and/or physio treatment will help prevent the problem deteriorating to the point it affects your sleep.