

Serving the local community since 2001

# Back in Shape



## Physiotherapy & Pilates



### Helen's Mat Classes

**Term dates: 2019 Term 3**

**Start: Monday 15 July**

**End: Wednesday 11 September**

#### Alphington Bowls Club

Parkview Rd, Alphington

#### 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: 9-week term: \$207 or \$28/class casual

**Fri:** 8-week term: \$184 or \$28/class casual

#### Fairfield Community Room

Station St, Fairfield

#### Over 50s class

**Mon:** 9.30-10.15am

**Cost:** 9-week term: \$108 or \$14/class casual

#### Limited mobility class

**Mon:** 10.30-11.15am

**Cost:** 9-week term: \$108 or \$14/class casual

### Ageing actively: a balanced approach

I recently heard a comedian comment that if you fall over after the age of 50, people start talking about you having had '*a fall*', which is something guaranteed to make you feel old.

In fact, fall prevention has become a serious public health issue, due in no small part to the fact that Australia has an ageing population, with 23 per cent of the population forecast to be over 65 by 2050. Between now and 2050 the number of 65-84 year olds is expected to more than double, while the number of people over 85 will quadruple to 1.8 million.

Today, 54 per cent of hospital admissions in over 65 year olds is due to falls, and realistically we can only expect this figure to increase as the number and proportion of elderly people in Australia gets bigger. Alarming, 48 per cent of the hospitalisations that occurred from accidental falls in this age group happened in the home.

Clearly it would be wise to take action to prevent falls in the home amongst the elderly and a key way to do this is by improving their sense of balance. In fact, it is advisable for everybody to start challenging their sense of balance, as this is typically a skill we stop actively improving quite early on in our lives.

If you ever watch kinder/primary school children playing, they pretty much constantly challenge their sense of balance through play: actively trying to balance on walls and playground equipment, as well as running, skipping, jumping and hopping. Sadly, by the time we go to high school, we radically reduce many of these undertakings and the average adult engages in almost no significant activities that challenge his or her balance.

As with all physical capabilities, if we don't practice our balance on a regular basis, then our ability to balance will progressively diminish over time, until suddenly we find ourselves in the over 65 age category and extremely unstable on our feet.

Practising balancing activities actually doesn't take a great deal of hard work or time, and in many instances can be incorporated easily into everyday activities. Here's a few ideas how you can begin to improve your balance today:

1. Standing on one leg. If this sounds easy, try it. You might be disappointed how poorly you perform! You can



### PUBLIC HOLIDAY ALERT:

There are no public holidays this term, although Helen leaves for Bali on Thursday 12 September, hence the shorter term

### Tim's Pilates

Call Tim for information on 0410 010818

These classes will run continuously without term breaks.

#### Alphington Bowls Club

Parkview Rd, Alphington

**Mon:** 6-7pm

**Cost:** \$120 for a block of 10 classes or \$15/class casual



practise this easily while you are queueing or cleaning your teeth or even washing up. Once you are confident in your ability to stand on one leg, try challenging yourself further by floating your non-weight-bearing leg, or extending it in front of you. There are any number of similar single-leg standing exercises I cover in my classes that provide progressions to suit all abilities.

2. Walking on uneven ground, such as bushwalking. You might not think that this would have much effect, but anything that results in a foot position that is more articulated than walking on flat even ground will challenge your balance.

3. Likewise, other activities that alter our normal relationship with the ground—such as skating, rollerblading, skateboarding, or even cycling—will begin to challenge your sense of balance and build core strength.

So even if you've never thought about the risk of 'a fall', or consider yourself too young to worry about such things, improving your balance now can help you keep active and independent for longer in later years.

## Active Standing Exercises

'Active Upright Exercises' are designed to be performed anywhere where you find yourself stationary on your feet: queuing at the ATM; standing at the sink; or anywhere where you have a few minutes to kill. So don't just stand there. Stand actively!



### Iliacus activation: deep hip stabiliser

This exercise is ideal if you have tight hip flexor muscles, overactive Psoas muscles, or for all of you out there who spend a lot of time sitting.

- Stand with your feet hip-distance apart, with your knees soft and your foot arches lifted.
- Keep your weight equally in the centre of your heels and equally at the base of your big and little toes.
- Put your hands on your hips and feel the prominent bony parts either side, level or just below the level of your navel.
- Keep your tummy relaxed and hook your fingertips inside these as deep as you can.
- As you breath out, rock your weight back onto your heels, just short of feeling that you will fall backwards. Notice how the muscles under your fingertips tauten.
- As you breath in, rock your weight back to the start position and feel the muscles relax.
- Repeat as many times as you are able.
- For added progression, try holding this position for the breath in as well as the breath out, and even holding for multiple breaths.

## Contract / Relax

### The subtle art of letting go

For the last two terms, I have been finishing each of my mat classes with a five-minute session of relaxation, using a technique called *Contract / Relax*.

I hope my class participants have been enjoying this and finding it useful.

The more observant amongst you may have noticed that this last term I have taken you through exactly the same repertoire at the end of the class every week. I have done purposefully with the intent that the repetition will better help you learn the technique to enable you to do it for yourself when you find the need or inclination.

The idea behind the *Contract / Relax* technique is that you contract or squeeze a specific muscle or muscle group to allow you to feel what it is like when those muscles are tight. And then you relax them to let you feel the difference.

Every day we are bombarded with information on the importance of movement, staying active and improving strength, and I am not going to undermine those messages.

However, it is equally important for our muscles to be able to let go after we have worked them, and for us to have the capability to discern if a muscle is working overtime or getting too tight.

Try performing this *Contract / Relax* technique in a sitting or lying position every day or multiple times a day if your schedule allows. Try it after exercise and especially if you have difficulty getting to sleep.

Not only will this technique help you relax your muscles and release built-up muscle tension, but it will also provide you with greater insight into where you are consistently tight and provide you with a useful tool to correct this muscle tightness over time.

For more information on the *Contract / Relax* technique, please come along to one of my mat classes, or book in for a one-on-one physio consultation.

