

Serving the local community since 2001

Back in Shape



Physiotherapy & Pilates



Helen's Pilates

Term dates: 2017 Term 4

Start: Monday 9 October

End: Monday 18 December

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**Alphington Bowls Club
Parkview Rd, Alphington**

All ages and abilities classes

Mon: 12-1pm

Wed: 5.30-6.30pm

Fri: 9.15-10.15am & 10.30-11.30am

Cost:

Mon: 10-week term: \$200

Wed & Fri: 10-week term: \$200

OR \$25/class casual

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**Fairfield Community Room
Station St, Fairfield**

Over 50s class

Mon: 9.30-10.15am

Limited mobility class

Mon: 10.30-11.15am

Cost:

10-wk term: \$100

OR \$12/class casual

PUBLIC HOLIDAY ALERT:

**There will be no classes on Monday 6
November (Melbourne Cup Eve)**

The bones of the matter

Are you postmenopausal, or are you over the age of 50 of either sex? If so, you should go and see your GP and ask for a referral for a bone scan to check you do not have *Osteoporosis* or *Osteopaenia*. This has been my advice to patients for many years, and as a 53-year-old postmenopausal woman, I thought I should practice what I preach and get a bone scan done myself.

To recap on an earlier article I wrote on the subject, *Osteoporosis* results from the loss of minerals (mainly Calcium), thereby making all the bones in the body relatively brittle and more prone to fractures. As there are no obvious symptoms, a fracture is often the first indication that a patient has *Osteoporosis*, and this most commonly occurs as a result of a fall but is also possible from everyday bumps and movements. *Osteoporosis* is irreversible, but simple measures can (and should) be taken to prevent the condition from getting worse. By comparison, *Osteopaenia* is a diagnosis that the bone density is lower than ideal, but is a condition that is fully reversible. However, if you have *Osteopaenia* and choose to do nothing, it is almost certain that in time you will develop *Osteoporosis* in the affected area.

To be honest, I didn't think I really needed a bone scan. Sure, I'm over 50, and yes, I'm postmenopausal, but I did not consider myself to really be in an at-risk category. After all, I am fit, active, healthy, enjoy a good diet, and love spending time outdoors. On the exercise front, I enjoy Pilates, yoga, walking, cycling and swimming. If ever there were a 50-something postmenopausal woman who had nothing to worry about concerning osteoporosis or osteopaenia, I believed I was it!

Imagine then my shock then when I got the results. A normal result for a bone scan—properly called a 'DEXAscan', which is short for 'Dual Energy Xray Absorptiometry'—is a T-score between zero and minus 1. My results showed that I have a T-score of -1.5 in my hips, which is a diagnosis for *Osteopaenia*, and a T-score of -2.5 in my lower back, which is a diagnosis for *Osteoporosis*.

A bone scan is a simple, non-invasive procedure—similar to a regular X-ray—and only takes 15 minutes. It costs \$110, which is not rebatable under Medicare unless you are 70 or older, have experienced an early menopause (defined as having occurred before the age of 45), or have already suffered a fracture.

While my own scan results came as both a shock and a disappointment, I am glad I didn't wait until I am 70 to get one done, as by then the *Osteoporosis* in my back would be far worse and the *Osteopaenia* in my hips would have most likely degenerated into *Osteoporosis*. Having my test results means I am able to take appropriate action to reverse the *Osteopaenia* and minimise the ongoing deterioration of the *Osteoporosis*. I am doing this by ensuring I eat a calcium-rich diet, increase my Vitamin D levels, and by tailoring my physical activities.

Physio & Pilates Appointments

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Calcium-rich foods include dairy, oily fish and green vegetables. Vitamin D levels in the body can be most effectively and naturally increased by exposure to sunshine for five to ten minutes a day, or through supplements. And on the exercise front I'd recommend a program undertaken three times a week that includes weight-bearing activities, such as Pilates, walking, light jogging, skipping and weights.

As I subsequently discovered, having had four children, and being a fair-haired blue-eyed, lightly built Caucasian will have contributed to my risk of *Osteoporosis*. But I have experienced no pain, no stiffness and no weakness. So my advice is this: the **only way** to know if you are at risk is to have a bone scan. So book one today to ensure you have the healthiest and happiest future possible.

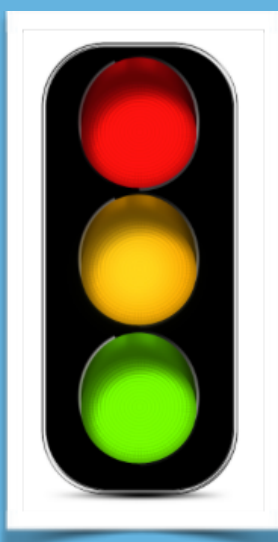
Traffic Light Exercises

Don't waste time sitting at red lights. Try the latest traffic light exercise instead!

Shoulder de-stress: self trigger-point release

The Upper Trapezius and Levator Scapulae muscles run from the base of the head down either side of the neck and attach into the top of the shoulder blade all the way to the tip of the shoulder. These muscles often become tight when we get stressed, so this simple exercise will help you de-stress.

- With your opposite hand, go hunting along the length of the muscle with your finger tips, initially pressing gently but increasing the pressure as necessary.
- You are looking for tender spots. When you find one, apply just enough pressure to feel a bit of pain.
- Maintain the pressure, keep breathing, focus on the pain and it should subside.
- Once the pain subsides, continue to maintain the pressure with your finger tips and slowly lower your opposite ear to the shoulder and you will feel a stretch under your fingertips.
- Release your fingers and go hunting for another tight spot.



Feeling the heat

Hot-pack advice

I recently discovered *Hotteeze* self-adhesive heat pads (see picture above), available at most pharmacies. These are designed to be applied over thin layer of clothing, can be used day or night, and stay hot for a good 12 hours. Having used these myself, I can wholeheartedly recommend them.

Heat should be applied if your muscles feel tight or if your joints feel stiff. Heat increases the temperature of the skin, joints and soft tissues, which increases the blood flow through vasodilation. This increases the metabolic rate, tissue extensibility, uptake of oxygen and accelerates tissue healing.

Heat also reduces nerve sensitivity, relaxes muscles and decreases the muscle tone, which can help increase flexibility and decrease joint stiffness.

Our muscles love heat. If pain is caused by muscle tightness, heat will help relieve it.

Conversely, ice should be applied if you think you have caused actual tissue damage, usually indicated by bruising or swelling or if the area feels hot.

Cold decreases the temperature of the skin and soft tissues, causing the blood vessels to constrict (vasoconstriction). This decreases metabolism, neural excitability (i.e. pain), and inflammation. When tissue is cooled below 30°C the enzymes that otherwise would cause further injury are inhibited.

Ice packs should only be applied for 10 minutes at a time, as vasoconstriction should be followed by vasodilation to help prevent tissue damage arising through lack of oxygen. Alternatively, ice blocks can be used to massage the skin directly, but only for a maximum of 1-2 minutes.