



**Full Potential**  
Physical Therapy

*The Newsletter About Achieving  
and Maintaining Optimal Well-Being*



## THE DECONDITIONED "YOU"

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*Come Back  
to PT!*

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your appointment today!**



# THE DECONDITIONED “YOU”

In nature, as the weather improves and the soil warms, we see a corresponding increase in activity with plants and even animals as they come out of hibernation. Heat and increased activity go together in nature and as well we, who have been cooped up all winter, start moving more too. Nature not only is calling us outside to play but there are a number of tasks asking for our attention too.

The question is how ready is our body for what nature, our home, garden, and even sports are calling it to do. One might look back in time to get that answer by seeing how active did we stay when the snow was flying and we were in a quasi-hibernation mode.

As we wonder how out of shape we are from winter's containment, we could more specifically ask what exactly is changing during those long winter months when we slow down and make better friends with the couch? In thinking about our bodies and all the parts that are involved in physical activity, who is the guilty party in making it a tough transition back to meeting the joys and demands of warm weather?

Although our joints can ache and become stiff with less activity which does depend on age and arthritic changes too, they are not the tissue that is most susceptible to degradation.

So, who is left in our mobility system that is adversely affected by inactivity? The simple answer is the mover of bones and joints – or muscle. It is amazing how much muscle can degrade in strength, endurance, and flexibility with 4-5 months of reduced activity. We can have this misplaced idea of jumping back into activity in a relatively short time as our muscles just experienced five months of an enforced vacation.

Muscle is the steering system for our bones and joints and when we go out and try to be more active after a long winter, our joints can be the areas where pain shows up. As a result, our attention is drawn to those fulcrums (joints) in our body which take on the stress from deconditioned muscle. And, it is not like all muscle responds the same to inactivity, some muscles are much more vulnerable to losing their strength than others. A good example are the muscles on the front of our thigh (Quads) or our abs, both of which are key muscles for being active.

*So, who is left in our mobility system that is adversely affected by inactivity?*

*(Continued Inside)*

(Continued from Outside)

We have over 600 muscles in our body responsible for steering over 200 bones. Steering is an interesting word; we can get a sense of this word as we drive our car and get into a tight spot with oncoming traffic. Here our steering has to be more precise and so our nervous system needs to be able to control our car more exactly. Deconditioning causes not only reduced tone and even muscle mass (atrophy) but it is our nervous system, who is really behind the scenes running the show, that is vulnerable to losing its ability to quickly and efficiently talk to the related muscles to get the correct response. When we get back into our favorite sport after a hiatus, we are a bit "rusty" as we like to say. In part, that is our nervous system which has lost some of its ability to be precise in talking to all the muscles involved in that activity.

So the efficient steering of bones and joints depends on muscle strength along with speed and coordination of muscle contraction from efficient nerve communication to handle a demanding activity. As well, what if we have gained a few pounds over the winter, muscle then has to handle more weight under deconditioned circumstances. Another variable to consider along with weight gain is, unfortunately, age. Age, weight gain, inactivity and long cold winters are not a good mixture of variables for a smooth transition back to activity yet they often go together.

Now we are certainly oversimplifying the process in this discussion to make help explain an important point about the relationship between muscles and joints. When you get into pain, are over 40 years in age and visit your doctor, it is not uncommon after the x-ray and his/her assessment to point to the joint as being the issue – "Sorry to inform you, but you have arthritis in your knee, hip, shoulder, or lower back, that is causing your pain." True, your pain could be centered around these joints, but now the question that should come bouncing back into the discussion is, "How is my steering system performing?" Are my joints vulnerable to stress from a deconditioned neuromotor system? Yes, arthritis is a factor in the joint's integrity, and as we discussed in last month's newsletter, it shows up in our joints on a gradient from mild to severe but we now understand how pain around a joint could relate to our muscles.

One might ask what are the factors that cause arthritis in the first place? As discussed last month, trauma is a factor but perhaps an even bigger one is a poor neuromuscular control system over time. Control of the timing and motion in a joint is a big piece to protecting it from excessive stress. This is especially true the faster you move. From this discussion our attention should have a wider viewpoint about the interaction between muscle, bones and joints and how a body gets into trouble.

Now, with all the above being said the beauty of our bodies is muscle can respond to positive inputs just like it does the negative. Muscle can get longer and stronger just like it can get shorter and weaker. Handling pain related to joints, ligaments, and tendons (terminal piece of muscle that attaches to bone) needs to consider the role of muscle in protecting those structures. Full Potential PT's main focus after calming the pain in a joint is improving your neuromuscular system to protect your joints and improve performance. Improving would include not only upgrading the strength in the muscle but the ability of the muscle to respond to the nerve's communication more quickly and in coordination for the activity. A muscle system that can respond quickly is more prepared to protect you from an injury.

Let's say you have a sore back or knee and its from being more active, you use Advil, Aleve, or Ibuprofen for pain and inflammation, can you see you are quite possibly only treating the symptoms of a poor muscular control system? As mentioned earlier, arthritis and joint breakdown can be the result of choosing only a medication to handle the problem compared to addressing why the joint is under stress and potentially degrading.

When dealing with ongoing pain in your joints, think about this article and the role of muscle in protecting the joints of your body. Full Potential specializes in joint protection strategies and the gradient progression of exercise to put you back in action after a long winter or whenever joint or muscle pain is knocking on your door. Don't just treat the pain, treat why you are having it and save your joints.

Got a question about this article, email me at vince@fullpotentialpt.com and let's clear it up. Or, check our Blog at fullpotentialpt.com for further elaboration on this fascinating topic.

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT

The Indy Mini, otherwise known as OneAmerica 500 Festival Mini-Marathon, is one of the largest ½ marathon races in the country with about 20,000 participants this year. The Indy Mini features entertainment all along the course for both spectators and runners alike. Participants also get to run a lap on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, which is 2 ½ miles long. After the race, the festival holds a post race party with live music, food and activity vendors. Whether a participant, spectator or volunteer, to be present at the Indy Mini is a great experience!

This was my first experience running such a large race. As usual, my nerves were quite high. I received encouragement from a patient who told me to embrace those nerves as the adrenaline I needed for the race, which was such great advice! I also passed that onto Megan Ready (former Full Potential employee) who ran the race with employee Jeremy Decker and myself.

Training for the Indy Mini this past winter/spring taught me a lot, not only about myself as a runner, but how important it is to live a healthy lifestyle and the steps that I needed to take. Something I teach and educate my patients about is how to start something



new, such as an exercise program or eating a healthy diet. It is important to start slow, give it time, and stick to it no matter how hard it is.

For this half, I wanted to shave approx 45 seconds off per mile from my last race (about 10 minutes overall). This means that I needed to wake up earlier and train in the morning! Yikes! So as I teach my patients, I started the process of getting up earlier each morning and training no matter how hard it was. I stuck with it and it got easier. I came to enjoy waking up and running, even in the brisk winter temps that this past winter brought us. Also, with training more intensely, I really started watching what I ate as I noticed a direct correlation between how I felt with what I ate. Don't be mistaken, I still enjoy my occasional doughnut or dish of ice cream, but I balance my sweet tooth with plenty of "good for me foods". I learned through this race that hard work pays off. After committing to my training schedule, I was able to accomplish my goal and reach a PR!

## *We Want to Hear From You!*

**We love providing educational content for our Patients each month! Scan the QR code with your phone's camera to fill out our survey! This will allow us to provide the most relevant content, that YOU want to read about each month!**



**Has your pain come back? We can help! Call us at 616-537-2864 to book your appointment today!**

# DO YOU SUFFER FROM JAW, FACE OR NECK PAIN?

There is probably not a more frustrating area of pain and limitation in the body than the jaw/face region. When painful movements are promoted by just moving your jaw and so affecting your ability to eat, talk, laugh, sleep or even swallow, then a great portion of one's daily joys can be removed from the simple pleasures of life.

If you are currently having jaw and facial pain or historically have dealt with this problem and feel like you have an ongoing vulnerability to aggravating a previous jaw or facial pain disorder, you may think the natural resource to consider for getting help is your dentist. They can certainly help by addressing any dental issues and ruling out more serious possibilities that could be influencing the area.

Yet, when one is having ongoing jaw (TMJ) pain and possibly associated facial/neck/head pain, a question to ask yourself is if you have considered whether a TMJ trained physical therapist could help you overcome your problem? Often pain related to the face, jaw, and head that is not going away with doing simple interventions has multiple factors negatively affecting the area.

Handling problems of this nature involves hands on techniques to relax muscles related to the head, neck and jaw, modalities to help reduce joint stress and

inflammation, and exercises to improve posture and reverse the stresses landing on the jaw area.

In addition, the PT will need to spend a notable amount of time educating you on diet, relaxation and lifestyle changes to comprehensively address all the reasons why you hurt. There really is not another profession that will look at your situation so thoroughly and spend the time needed to address these issues.

Resolving pain related to the jaw, neck, and face can be multifactorial in its solutions and a PT specialized in the care of this area is a real asset to finding answers that not only lasts but teaches you how to avoid aggravating influences in the future.

Dentists and physicians have an important role to play in the care of their patients that is well recognized by the public, yet the physical therapist is very well trained to help you improve your motion and reduce your pain in this vital area and can educate you to be smarter about staying healthy. They have the time, education and methods to provide a conservative answer to many jaw-related problems so common today. Summer is full of fun, get-togethers and cookouts where corn on the cob, raw vegetables, and harder to chew foods are more a part of your diet. If you get into trouble, we are here to help.

When you are in pain and it is getting more difficult to eat, talk, yawn, laugh and live a normal life, think of Full Potential PT. We have three well trained PTs who can help you get back to enjoying the simple pleasures that we all take for granted until it hurts

## PLAY THE REFERRAL GAME

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*Your Name*

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*Our New Patient's Name!*

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*Date Of Referral*

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Receive a Meijer gift card to those that refer us to a patient!

# WELCOME TO THE FULL POTENTIAL FAMILY!

Maggie Ann Hillary was born 5/23/22, 8 lbs, 19.5 inches to Mari and Adam Hillary. Her big brother, Drew, is obsessed with her and loves being a big brother! Her favorite hobbies are to sleep and snuggle and be held but she has enjoyed going on walks in her carrier. We are adjusting well at home and our cats, Scout and Boo, are adjusting as well and are less jealous these days :)



## PATIENT *Success* STORY



### GAINS WITH SHOULDER, TMJ, AND OVERALL MAINTENANCE!

I am so fortunate to have the support of my Full Potential Team. Each one of them is knowledgeable, professional and personable. Luke and Jodi just helped me through shoulder replacement rehabilitation. My pain is gone and my range of motion continues to increase. Mari has given me relief from years of issues with TMJ. Vince has been my main support and "maintenance man" for over ten years. As an MS patient I am thankful for his patience and constancy. Meg is the newest member of my team. She represents all of the kind and thoughtful staff who greet us as we walk through the door and all of those behind the scenes we do not see but fully appreciate.

My thanks to the whole Full Potential Team.

*Kate R.*

100%  
OVERALL IMPROVEMENT

 **Full Potential**  
Physical Therapy

Nagging pain that won't go away? Call us at 616-537-2864 to book your appointment today!