

MEDICAL NEWS: IS SITTING THE NEW SMOKING? A LOOK INTO THE CONSEQUENCES OF A SEDENTARY SOCIETY

A healthy, pain-free back is worth its weight in gold. Park Igls sheds light on the human backbone from every angle: for example, a balanced acid-base ratio reduces the risk of inflammation, while frequently changing position when sitting can prevent back pain. Find out how to protect your psyche from autumn and winter depression and beat the blues with Modern Mayr cuisine. Plus: discover how exercise and a healthy diet can increase fertility.

A healthy back for a happy life

Back pain is the number one reason for long-term sick-leave – and we can place the blame on our sedentary society. Looking at modern life, it is clear that we have metamorphosed from Homo erectus who moves, to Homo sedens who sits. The spine needs constant movement to stay healthy, and frequently changing position helps achieve this. Healthy sitting is about change and remembering that the next position is better. Too little physical activity can overload the discs resulting in pain. In response to pain, we tend to adopt a poor posture... it's a vicious circle. The winning treatment-combo is pain and exercise therapy with physiotherapy, psychotherapy, and lifestyle changes. The biggest no-no is bed rest. 'Exercise is fundamental. Back pain won't improve without it,' explains Dr Peter Gartner, Medical Director at Park Igls Mayr clinic.

Can mental health issues effect our back?

There is an inseparable connection between body, mind and emotions. 'When the psyche suffers, so do the back, muscles and posture. The psyche always looks for an outlet in the body, and these areas tend to offer the least resistance. Injuries, trauma and emotional pain; feelings of guilt, failure, overwork and fear are often reflected on a physical level unless they are dealt with quickly,' according to Dr Peter Barth, Mayr Physician at Park Igls and specialist in psychosomatic medicine. Pain is the body's way of warning us that something is wrong. Patients should seek medical advice immediately if they feel restricted, notice physical or psychological symptoms and/or begin to have trouble sleeping. Initially, a patient needs to be assessed for structural changes (e.g. of the spine), postural imbalances, trapped nerves, muscle tension or stiffness before therapy can begin. There is no simple answer when it comes to interplay between mind and body, and for pain therapy to be successful in the long term, physical activity must be part of the solution.

A healthy gut for a pain-free life

Any inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract can also irritate connective tissue in the vascular system, muscles and back. Many orthopaedic conditions originate in the gastrointestinal tract. The hip flexor, for example, can become strained when the large intestine is inflamed, and trigger symptoms similar to that of a slipped disc. The neck and shoulder muscles are reflexively connected to the stomach and also to the gut via the spinal cord. Gastritis therefore has a direct impact on these muscle groups. The body's various systems communicate via nerves and hormones – inflammatory reactions are therefore also transmitted in this way, thus affecting the physical structure, including posture. Conversely, posture also has an influence on our organs. Muscle tone and posture can even be affected by flatulence (as it pushes against organs, resulting in nerve irritation). Poor posture often compensates for chronic gas in the large intestine, which can lead to curvature of the spine, pelvic obliquity and unequal leg length. In many cases, problems with the locomotor system can be eliminated with a colon cleanse. To maintain a healthy gut, our bodies need to

absorb nutrients that effectively inhibit inflammation, enhance mood and strengthen the locomotor and skeletal systems.

Vitamins and back pain

First the bad news: abdominal fat promotes chronic inflammation, often leading to musculoskeletal pain. Now the good news: reducing calorie intake can prevent inflammation, lower the risk of pain and result in a healthy balance of gut bacteria. 'Musculoskeletal pain is often linked to the body's inflammatory processes, and, although we can't eat pain away, we can choose foods that are anti-inflammatory, nourishing the connective tissue and supporting bone and muscle function. Eating such foods can reduce the risk of osteoporosis and bone fractures, therefore lessening the chance of chronic back pain', says Dr Irene Brunhuber, GP and Mayr Physician at the Park Igls Mayr clinic. But for positive results, you need a healthy gut without which even the best combination of nutrients won't work.

When hormones step out of line

Menopausal symptoms and infertility are often caused by easily rectifiable underlying problems. When women suffer from menopausal symptoms such as extreme lethargy or difficulty sleeping, hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is recommended. Exercise (around two and a half hours per week) and a healthy diet are key when it comes to hormonal problems. We know there is a connection between sugar metabolism and fertility. Being either obese or underweight, consuming excessive alcohol or caffeine, and smoking all affect fertility. Exercise and a thorough detox with a Mayr programme are known to improve sugar metabolism. An international study from 2019 shows that a healthy gut with an intact microbiome (gut bacteria) improves the symptoms of polycystic ovaries and increases fertility. According to Dr Gartner, 'Time and again we have seen women who want to have a baby fall pregnant after a Mayr treatment.'

Autumn blues and winter depression

As the days get shorter, wetter and darker, the barometer drops and the sun begins its hibernation, even the happiest soul can withdraw into couch-potato mode. Energy, vitality, motivation and social life hit rock bottom. Cravings for carbs and sugar, an irresistible need for sleep, profound sadness and a decreased libido are suddenly the norm. Winter depression creeps in with the autumn blues and takes hold of its victims, making them lethargic, irritable and throwing them off balance. But you can take action against it, and radiate joy once more.

Comfort food for heart and brain

When the cold, rain and fog are getting you down, having a bite to eat often makes things feel better – however, comfort should ideally be sought in fibre-rich foods such as wholegrain products and vegetables. Gentle steaming keeps them tender and nutritious, allowing you to soak up their positive energy and natural antidepressant properties. Give your microwave, fryer, pressure cooker and grill a rest – or, retire them altogether. Modern Mayr cuisine provides reenergising meals for winter, using light, warming and healthy ingredients. This includes freshly-prepared, steamed vegetarian dishes, wholesome oils, (dried) fruit, cereals, pulses and metabolism-boosting spices such as mustard, ginger, garlic, pepper, cloves and cinnamon. Hot drinks, ideally ginger or cinnamon tea, also form part of Modern Mayr cuisine, which favours hot meals over raw foods, especially in the evenings. However, high fat or fried food should be avoided at all costs. Park Igls' latest ParkZeit magazine shares some top recipes for beating the winter blues.

About Park Igls Mayr clinic

Austria's pre-eminent Mayr clinic is a tranquil Alpine haven set in a luxuriant park above Innsbruck, only 15 minutes from the airport and the historic city centre. In the beautiful setting of the established mountain resort of Igls, the pioneers of Modern Mayr Medicine have raised the bar for scientific health tourism. Park



Igls Mayr clinic's friendly and professional team of experts offers personalised exercise and treatment programmes for sufferers from a wide range of ailments from burn-out to golf injury and sleep disorders, using conventional and complementary medical techniques to deliver sustainable results. Delectable cuisine complements all eight dietary stages of the detox process and a clean, bright décor offers an appealing environment. A panoramic pool, an extensive menu of spa and beauty treatments, and exercise sessions including Yoga and kybun® training in the gym promote physical and emotional wellbeing.

www.park-igls.at

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