



Joint and tendon care: the fountain of youth?

By Dr. James Perry, Northwest Orthopaedic Specialists, P.S.



Although it is known that as we age, various parts of our bodies get stiff, tender and heal more slowly than they did when we were teenagers, there is good news. Did you know that our muscles still respond to exercise identically as they did when we were 16-years old?

It has been proven that, under a microscope, a weightlifter's muscles at age 70 look identical to a weightlifter's muscles at 16. That is why orthopedic doctors like myself give a great deal of attention to strengthening in prevention and treatment of muscle and skeletal disease and injuries.

As a joint becomes arthritic, it becomes even more important to exercise the surrounding muscles to help support that joint and keep arthritic complications from cropping up. As we strive to keep from having to perform surgery, we focus on specific, selected exercises for injuries such as rotator cuff, chronic strains or sprains, and degenerative disc problems of the back and neck.

Folks with hip or knee problems should ride a stationary bike, swim or do strengthening exercises that keep weight off the joint. Walking can actually be more harmful in this situation.

Those with shoulder injuries such as rotator cuff tears should perform selected exercises to get back in shape, while folks suffering from back and neck injuries need yet another approach. For them, aerobic-type exercises such as walking and riding bike, coupled with stretching and strengthening exercises, can do as much as medication or other forms of treatment.

Those other conservative treatments we use *in addition to exercise*, are known as "joint additives." Chondroitin and glucosamine have been found effective in various types of arthritis, and anti-inflammatory medications and artificial lubricants are also available in select cases. Despite medication, and of course, surgery, specific exercise is the most important thing you can do to keep your muscles, joints and tendons young.

At the orthopedic clinic in Davenport, we work closely with the physical therapists at Lincoln Hospital, as well as your primary care physicians, to coordinate these programs. Be careful to not design your own exercise program. Enlist the professionals who will make sure you do only good, not harm, to your body. All of us here in your local medical community agree that a professionally tailored, long-term home program is key to keeping you feeling and acting young.

Dr. James Perry, and his associate, Dr. James Dunlap of Northwest Orthopaedic Specialists, P.D. of Spokane, take turns running the weekly orthopedic clinic at the Lincoln Medical Center building. Select orthopedic surgeries are performed at Lincoln Hospital. To make appointments call (509) 624-4192 and ask for an appointment in Davenport.