



How Physiotherapy Can Help

Physiotherapy uses a clinical reasoning process to specifically diagnose a dysfunctional part of the body and to determine poor movement patterns. There may be weakness or tightness in certain muscles which affect the way the joint and associated areas move – biomechanics. This is done by obtaining a good history of how the injury occurred and/or which specific movements cause pain, as well as observing the way the affected part moves and doing other objective tests (nerve, muscle and joint tests). Any part of the body that has a nerve supply can potentially cause pain and it is not always easy to determine the exact cause of pain. Pain is often referred from another area. Also, once pain has been present for 3 months there is evidence that areas of the brain associated with the painful part change. These parts of the brain can be affected by other parts of the brain, such as emotional areas, memory etc. This is why stress and previous trauma can perpetuate pain. Pain is also affected by the immune and autonomic (i.e. Flight Fright Response) systems of the body. Often people with pain need to see one of our psychologists to help with this. Relaxation is also important and can be achieved through psychology, massage and undertaking the Mindfulness course.

Treatment of the pain and dysfunction is multifactorial; Physiotherapy will stretch tight muscles, strengthen weak muscles, and improve stability of the affected area. Often “hands on” or mobilisation is done to move joints that are stiff and to relax muscle spasm. Also Education about posture and staying mobile are important. Some people with chronic pain conditions require treatment of the brain using virtual images on the computer, and mirror boxes to try to trick the brain into recognizing the affected part as being ‘normal’ again.