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MAGAZINE

Mountainside

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GYM ETIQUETTE

The Do's & Don't's

Before You Eat That...

CHEW ON THIS!

Jennie Finch

**THE
GOLDEN GIRL**

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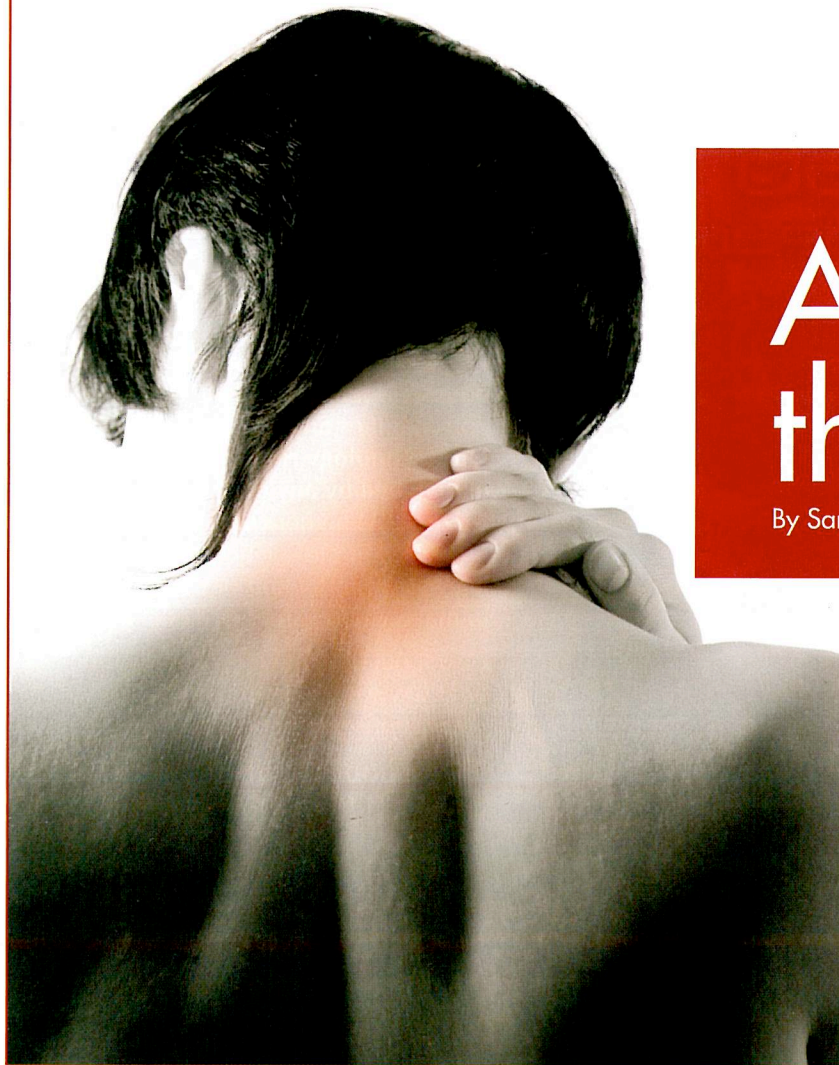
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A Pain in the Neck

By Sari Lewis, OTR/L, RCST

You twist the wrong way . . . You wake up with a painful 'snag' . . . You can't turn your head far enough to back out of the driveway . . . You have a nagging headache . . . These are all familiar symptoms to most of us who have experienced a pain in the neck. Why is neck pain so common?

The cervical spine supports the weight of our head, protects the nerves within and surrounding the spinal cord and allows movement in many directions. A

complex system of ligaments, tendons, muscles and fascia work together to support the cervical spine and prevent excessive movement while providing spinal balance, stability and safe range of motion.

Poor posture, incorrect ergonomics and old injuries can affect the alignment of the bones and tissues of the neck and surrounding areas, creating muscle spasms, pain and restricted motion. Maintaining a neutral, upright posture becomes a challenge. With so many of our daily activities performed directly in front of us, a special effort is required to maintain a neutral alignment.

On average, our head weighs about 10 pounds and makes up 8% of our entire body mass. That's like walking around with a bowling ball precariously balanced on our necks. No wonder we become tired and sore!

5 tips for preventing neck pain

For further information or to contact Sari Lewis visit www.Sarihands.com

- 1** Slowly, gently stretch all the tissues surrounding the head, neck and upper back. It's important to stretch all the muscles and tissues equally as they work together to support the weight of the head.
- 2** Heat can help relax tight tissues, and ice is useful for decreasing pain and inflammation while improving fluid nutrition to the tissues. Ice your tender spots for 10-15 minutes after a warm shower or working out.
- 3** Hydration is important for any imbalance or injury, so drink lots of water! Hydration helps the connective tissues to glide better and prevents the build-up of toxins, which can cause more discomfort.
- 4** Use just one pillow under your head for sleeping - this prevents the head from being pushed too far forward or to the side. Also avoid sleeping on your stomach, and try 'hugging' additional pillows to help support your shoulders and knees.
- 5** Get help! We can all benefit from having tight, restricted tissues released . . . A qualified Occupational, Physical or Massage Therapist, Acupuncturist or Chiropractor may be a helpful resource.