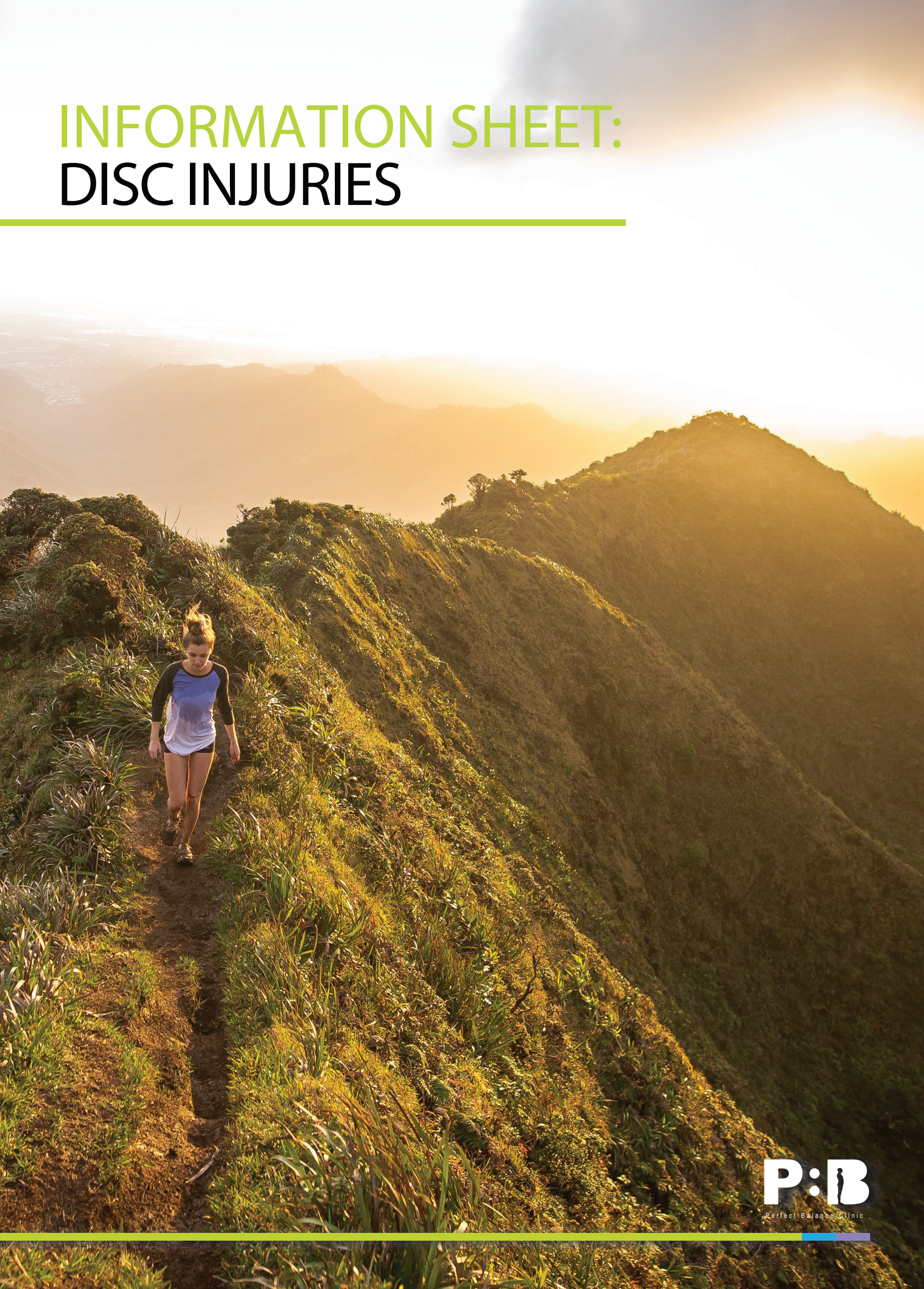


INFORMATION SHEET: DISC INJURIES



INFORMATION SHEET: DISC INJURIES

What are Disc Injuries?

Intervertebral discs are a very important structure in the human body. Their main roles are to absorb shock and to allow movement in the spine in various motions i.e. flexion (bending forwards), extension (bending backwards), side bend, and rotation. Of the 23 discs in total, there are five discs in the lower back (lumbar region) that are prone to 'slips', more so than those of the cervical (top) and thoracic (middle) regions of the spine. Common symptoms of disc injury include:

- low back pain
- referral pain on the posterior thigh
- pain on the outer side of the shin and into the toes. This distribution could additionally feature pins and needles, or numbness. Sometimes, motor weakness is noted in the lower limbs too
- spasms in local tissues (as a protective mechanism) hence why there is a dramatic change in posture when a disc injury occurs, if it is symptomatic. Sometimes disc injuries may not present with a symptom; there may be a prolapse seen by an MRI scan or an X-ray. If there is no encroachment onto a nerve root that comes from the spinal nerves, then there is a chance that there could be no obvious symptoms.

Aggravating factors of disc prolapse include:

- side-bending
- bending backwards
- compression.

Things that can cause disc prolapse include:

- 'wear and tear'
- a tight piriformis muscle trapping the sciatic nerve (piriformis syndrome), which also has similar pain distribution but starts off from the buttock region; pins and needles, and numbness, may also be felt
- poor posture
- abnormal alterations in the spinal curvature.

How do I decrease the chances of my Disc Injury getting worse?

Exercise:

Exercises prescribed by your Physiotherapist are one of the most effective ways to speed recovery from a back injury and will help strengthen back and abdominal muscles. Disc height reduces with age making it more prone to injury. Healthy exercise is one of the most effective way of decreasing the chances of your disc injury getting worse in the future.

INFORMATION SHEET: DISC INJURIES

Pilates

Pilates has been shown to result in changes in posture of the lower back and cause improvements in the control of the core. Those who participate in Pilates are better able to recruit and utilize their deep abdominal muscles and stabilize the pelvic area compared to those not trained in Pilates. Being physically active decreases the likelihood of having neck pain.

Pilates used as a specific core stability exercise incorporating functional movements can improve non-specific chronic low back pain. There is strong evidence supporting the effectiveness of muscle strengthening and endurance exercises for treating neck pain. Evidence indicates that muscle endurance exercise are effective for reducing disability attributed to neck pain.

Healthy diet

It's important to maintain proper nutrition and diet to reduce and prevent excessive weight, especially weight around the waistline that puts pressure on lower back discs. If you have a higher than average Body Mass Index (BMI) then you are more likely to suffer from disc injuries. A balanced diet is important for general health and below is a list of some foods and supplements which may help further with the protection of discs after injury:

- Eggshell membrane: contains elastin which supports cartilage/ disc health
- Oral hyaluronic acid supplements: this reduces in then body as we age but a supplement increases the nutrients in the cartilage. Hyaluronic acid can also be found in fruit and fish oils.
- Glucosamine and Chondroitin supplements: these increase protein which helps to make new cartilage and is useful in the treatment of osteoarthritis. There are no major food sources of glucosamine, so you must get it from supplements.
- Vitamin E: can be found in wheat germ oil, sunflower seeds and almonds and helps to promote healthy muscle and cartilage.
- Vitamin C: found in citrus fruits, this helps create collagen found in tendons and ligaments. Deficiency can cause joint pain.
- Lean protein: especially when obtained from fish, helps to reduce inflammation.
- Lysine: helps to produce collagen which is responsible for cartilage formation. It is found in such foods as red meat, legumes, cod and eggs.

General tips to maintain a healthy back

- Always do pain free stretching before exercise or other strenuous physical activity.
- Maintain good posture at work and home.
- When working at a computer make sure your ergonomics are correct. Discuss good work ergonomics with one of your Physiotherapists.
- Don't sit for long periods of time, get out of your chair regularly, and when sitting do postural correction exercises as prescribed by your Physiotherapist.
- If you spend long periods on your feet wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes.
- Don't try to lift objects too heavy for you. Always practice good lifting technique as taught by your Physiotherapist.

INFORMATION SHEET: DISC INJURIES

What can you do to help yourself?

Basic core and spine rehabilitation for disc prolapse is often the best course of action. It is vital that within the management of disc injuries, posture and pain management advice is provided to ensure a quicker recovery from spasmodic tissues and pain relief. If these are not advocated, then there is an increased chance of more damage to the discs and the client may experience more painful symptoms. Rehabilitation includes:

- dry needle/acupuncture on the surrounding muscles
- sports taping/Kinesio taping
- warm packs also help during the early stages to decrease muscle spasms and relax the tissue
- cold packs are good to decrease the inflammatory process at any stage of the prolapse
- surgical – the final straw if nothing else works!

Your next step

At PERFECT BALANCE CLINIC, we have extensive experience in Disc Injuries. We are a multi-disciplinary team of consultants and therapists who are dedicated to curing pain and getting you fully fit in the shortest possible time.

If you would like to learn more about Disc Injuries, give our team a call and we will ask you a few questions that will help us provide some immediate advice and fast-track you to our most appropriate therapist. Usually we can arrange an appointment within the next day or so, possibly even sooner.

Contacting PERFECT BALANCE CLINIC is the fastest way to get back on your feet pain free. Email us at info@perfectbalanceclinic.com or call our team on 0800 0724 012 and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

Important notification: We provide this information as a resource to ensure the best and most up-to-date research and information is at hand. The information offered may be used only as a guideline to help you understand your condition, your treatment and your body. Whilst the general guidelines of medicine are evidence based every person presents a unique challenge and that is why we recommend you visit our team for more specific information with regards to your condition or treatment.

Please contact us for information if you're worried about any aspect of your body in relation to the information you have read here. Perfect Balance Clinic accept no legal responsibility for any loss of damages if readers decide to not take our information sheet and visit our team for more specialist information with regards to their individual problem. The information provided is provided at your own risk and where possible is evidence based and taken from multiple various sources referenced where indicated.