

Arthritis, body ache problems during flood clean up

January 20 2011

In the aftermath of Australia's devastating floods, physiotherapists at the University of Melbourne have warned people of the risk of aggravating arthritis and causing their bodies' physical strain as they work to clean up after the floods.

Associate Professor Rana Hinman of the Centre for Health Exercise and Sports Medicine at the University of Melbourne said people with pre-existing problems such as [arthritis](#) in knees, hips or lower back pain may find their problems are aggravated by the physical nature of the clean-up work.

"With the clean up in full swing in many areas, a rise in the numbers of people with body aches and pains can be expected. Clean-up often requires repetitive bending activities, including lifting and carrying heavy loads, and often incorporating twisting movements, putting strains on the muscles and joints of the back and legs," she said.

"In addition, people are often working for much longer hours than they are used to, frequently carrying out tasks that involve unfamiliar or unpracticed movements."

She said aggravated pain sometimes begins suddenly, but quite often it develops slowly over a period of time.

People are reminded to take care of their bodies and to listen to what their bodies are telling them. Prevention is always better than cure.

“Those doing flood clean-up work should try to remember to stop for a brief rest at least every 20 minutes to allow fatiguing muscles a few minutes of recovery time,” Dr. Hinman said.

“This will help the muscles to continue to protect the joints as well as carry out the movements required for the task. When activities involve repeated or continuous bending actions, people should frequently stop to straighten up and gently stretch out their joints in the opposite direction.”

“If a new pain occurs or a previous problem starts to get worse, it is better to take action to prevent things from becoming an even longer term problem. Resting the injured part by avoiding painful activities or changing to lighter tasks for a day or two may be all that is required.”

Dr. Hinman said if the problem persisted, it may be necessary to seek advice or treatment from your GP or a physiotherapist.

Provided by University of Melbourne

Citation: Arthritis, body ache problems during flood clean up (2011, January 20) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-01-arthritis-body-ache-problems.html>

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