

You've Got Questions- I've Got Answers

By Lou Lombardo, LMT, NCTMB

A funny thing happened on the way to the checkout line. A grand looking lady came up to me, pointed to the contents in my shopping cart, which consisted of six gallon jugs of laundry detergent (it was on sale and I had coupons) and, with as straight a face as possible asked, “ How many carbs are in those?”

After we shared a little chuckle I discovered that she had been present at one of my talks on health & good nutrition.

And, I got to thinking about other questions people ask me at the grocery store or in the post office or even in my office during a massage.

So, in the interest of sharing with you some of those questions as well as my responses, this will be the first (or last, depending on your reaction) in a series of such columns. And, since people in my profession should know a lot about muscles, I will give it the title “Ask Mr. Muscles ‘R’ Us Man” (“MRU” for short)

Question: I was recently in a car accident and my doctor says I suffered whiplash. What is this condition and which muscles are involved?

Mr. MRU: Whiplash is a soft tissue injury to the neck characterized by a number of symptoms that occur following damage to the neck. The symptoms can occur immediately after the injury or may be delayed for several days. Symptoms can range from stiffness of the neck, headaches and dizziness to shoulder or back pain or a burning sensation in the stomach. In a front-end collision, the head is thrust forward and whipped backward. The extensors of the neck (splenius capitus & semisplinius capitus) and the upper trapezius are often injured because they are overstretched.

In a rear-end collision the head is thrust backward and whipped forward. The sternocleidomastoid (SCM) muscle and the scalenes are injured in this case.

If you were wearing your seat belt, which is why you are probably still alive, your pectoral muscles in your chest are often strained. The restraint of the seat belt prevents full movement forward. The driver will feel it in the left pectoralis minor and the passenger in the right one.

Question: How do you keep your hands and arms from getting sore from all those massages?

Mr. MRU: Massage therapists should do stretching exercises at the beginning of every massage (preferably before the client comes in the room). This ultimately reduces the chance of fatiguing or injuring muscles. However, since we don't always do that, there are times when we experience some mild tendonitis in the elbow areas.

The muscles that primarily affect the wrist and fingers (flexors, extensors, adductors and abductors) are located in the forearm. When soreness or tendonitis occurs, I administer deep, circular friction to those muscles to help ease the pain.

Question: I have pain shooting down my leg and it was diagnosed as sciatica. What's causing the pain?

Mr. MRU: Sciatic nerve is the largest in the body, about the thickness of the thumb. It exits our spinal column in the lower lumbar area and runs through the deep lateral rotator muscles and down the posterior (back) of the thigh. Any situation that causes this nerve to become irritated or inflamed resulting in pain from the buttocks down to the leg is known as sciatica.

Irritation of this nerve can begin inside the spinal column or may arise from muscles or ligaments that impinge (press upon) it. If the cause is muscular in nature, it can be treated by massage.

Question: Do you have more men or women come to you for massage?

Mr. MRU: About 80% of my clients are women and the rest (20% for you math challenged people) are men.

Question: Whom do you prefer to give massages to more, women or men?

Mr. MRU: None of your business.

Question: I am beginning my preparation for running and wonder what I should be doing to prevent hamstring or Achilles tendon injuries.

Mr. MRU: You should always include stretching in your preparations. This exercise warms up the muscles and makes them more flexible to the stresses of running. Stretching cannot hurt runners and is particularly important for those persons in their mid-30's, 40's and 50's. If you are preparing in the cold weather, you should start out slowly and then pick up your speed.

So, there you have it folks- the first of what could be several disastrous attempts to share information based on actual questions people have asked me.

Now, two questions I would like answered. Wouldn't "Muscles 'R' Us" be a great name for a heavy metal rock band? And, how can I type a backward 'R' using my computer?

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