

YOU'RE A TOOL

MGS Physiotherapy + Lifestyle Tradie



Your body is your most valuable tool, so invest in it!

Andy's been seeing the Physio's at MGS Physiotherapy for over 30 years and follows their guide religiously. Over the years, they've educated Andy on how to get his body in peak working condition so that he could be in the best physical shape to run his plumbing business, Dr DRiP.

We spoke with **Matt Geister**, one of the owners of MGS Physiotherapy, to get some professional advice on how tradies can avoid injuries and keep ourselves in great working condition.



Matt's top tips for avoiding injury:

1. Prepare your body.

Matt notes that preparation is key; Increasing your body's flexibility, core strength, and stability helps your body handle the loads required within your general workday.

There are so many effective and safe Gyms, studios and trainers around such as Code 5, F45, Vision or Crossfit Gyms. An experienced PT or EP is the best thing for your body — Matt recommends “anywhere a trained professional is guiding you is the best option if you are able to partake in it regularly”.

2. Be body aware.

When you feel a little ‘niggle’ or some early-stage symptoms of impending injury, don't ignore it; listen to your body and address its needs.

Please seek professional advice, start stretching, icing or resting to look after a potential injury when it first starts to bother you before it becomes a full-blown injury!

3. Being aware of your limitations

Many tradespeople are guilty of doing tasks the ‘quick and fast way’, which is not necessarily the right way.

For instance, when moving bags of concrete, traditionally there has been a stigma of don't be soft and just lift it — rather than taking the time to get the trolley out or asking for help and sharing the load.

Matt sees this all the time at his practice, where tradies injure themselves because they “just wanted to get it done quickly, were under other time pressures, or their apprentice was too far away.” At the time they sometimes don't think about the potential repercussions of their actions until it is too late.

Operating like this leaves you at higher risk of injury, such as a slipped disc which can take up to six weeks to heal. Imagine if you or one of your staff was off for six weeks; what kind of financial impact would that have on your business?

4. Stretch it out.

Building muscle and core strength is excellent. But if your muscles are tight, you still leave yourself at a higher risk of injury.

Learning to stretch your glutes, hip flexors, hamstrings, chest, and pecs will help take the load off the spine. Teaching your hips to be able to handle deeper squat positions and more mobility can avoid painful impingement conditions occurring.

Tradies' work is so varied, that they need to be the MOST body-conscious and be stretching consistently to minimise their risk of injury.

How to work exercise into your routine.

We hear you. You're up at the crack of dawn, you spend eight hours a day on the tools, and you come home exhausted. The last thing you can think about is hitting the gym, so Matt suggests bringing the gym to home.

Matt noted to us; "I'm a big fan of the self-motivated exercise. If you're someone who's great with self-motivated exercise, TRX is one of my go-to's... especially when combined with a chin-up bar and some kettlebells".

With the right routine that includes stretching, this setup can give you a full-body workout and strengthen your core without spending big on a gym membership. It's low impact and isn't super time consuming because it's in your own home and it covers the entire body parts as opposed to just floor based push ups, sit ups and plank eg.

Do I have to do this EVERY DAY?

No! Matt's recommendation is to action your routine a minimum of 3 - 4 times a week.

We get it, especially with young kids at home; it can be hard to find the time. You don't need to work out for a full hour either; a solid 20minute session following a routine, with a 5minute stretching cool off, can do you wonders.

Repetitive injury strain

"We get a lot of tradespeople who suffer from elbow tendonitis from overuse injuries. A tip for avoiding this is just mix it up, so you're not always using your

dominant hand all the time and give periods of rest in between." - Matt goes on to recommend a few basic on-site stretches for overuse injuries.

Overuse injuries can often come from the tools tradies use every day. A great way to help keep the forearms and elbows moving are 'median nerve stretches' like putting your palm flat against the wall and extending your arm, which gives a nerve stretch in the arm.

Glute stretches are also great. Matt joked that you could pop down the ute rear tray and throw your leg up on it during smoko. This simple stretch will get right into the core of your glute and relax the muscles.

You may bare the butt of some of your fellow tradies heckling and jokes, but trust us, you'll be the one laughing in the end.

Matt's overall recommendation: do everything smarter.

Think about the long term impacts of your actions – just because you CAN carry those bags of concrete because you're young and fit doesn't mean you SHOULD.

Good nutrition is also a given to achieving peak body performance. We all know the classic saying "you get out what you put in". Is the Meat Pie and Can of "V" really necessary for a 7am breakkie start?

Getting yourself into good, safe working habits whilst you are young is the best way to ensure you can have a long career and keep yourself safe from serious injury.

As trade business owners, you have a duty of care for your staff and should encourage these practices and strongly discourage bad ones.

Seek professional advice.

Stretching and strengthening are vital to keeping your body in work-ready condition. However, it's not always enough – seeking professional advice from a GP, chiro or Physio like our friends at MGS can be a significant next step to ensuring you don't end up out of work from an injury.

As a trade business owner, you have to see yours and your staff's bodies as your primary source of income. Teach your tradies how to look after themselves, and ensure that safe working practices are implemented and enforced within your business.