



# The M&M Motion Minute

## Does your arthritis pain get worse in the Winter? You May Not Be Alone....

Weather certainly can affect health conditions. Our bodies are always subject to environmental stresses—like altitude which affects pressures, allergens which affect our immune system, light and dark affect our natural cycles and our moods. There are countless ways that our bodies interact with our environment—some we understand and some we don't.

One of the most common questions

that physical therapists get from patients with arthritis is 'Why do I feel sore and stiff on cold, rainy days.' Or sometimes it's hot and humid days that aggravate symptoms.

The truth is there has not been very much actual scientific research on this particular phenomenon. There apparently was a small study done in 1961 by Dr. J. Hollander. He was able to show that joint pain and stiffness

was worsened by a combination of high humidity and low barometric pressure. It had to be both—just low pressure or just high humidity alone had no effect. This research, however, has been criticized because it only studied 12 people. The theory created by the study is that inflamed joints, which are closed, fluid filled spaces, swell as barometric pressure decreases, causing the stiffness and pain.

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## Annual Holiday Drawing

We are pleased to announce the winners of our Holiday Prizes. For each treatment session in December, our patients put their name in for a chance at one of three holiday gift baskets. We held our drawing on December 23rd.

The Winners:  
Starbucks Gift Basket  
Bob B.—Milwaukee  
Royal Delight Gift Basket  
Ardi B.—South Milw.  
Chocolate Gift Basket

Thanks to all of our patients in 2005 and to those that participated in our holiday drawing. We hope you all had a wonderful Holiday Season and we would like to wish everyone a prosperous and healthy 2006!

### Inside this issue:

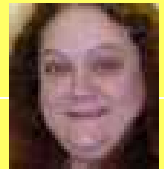
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### M&M PT Can Help With:

- Fibromyalgia
- TMJD (tempromandibular joint disease)
- Headaches/whiplash/cervical pain
- Rotator cuff and shoulder injuries
- Golf/tennis elbow, carpal tunnel
- Low back pain, sciatica, sacroiliac pain, hip pain
- Knee/ankle injuries and disorders
- And More

# From Anne's Desk:

## Anne Answers Some Frequently Asked Questions About Insurance



As the New Year approaches, some of you may be changing insurances. The following is a list of insurances we are part of: Aetna, AHC, American CareSource, American Whole Health Discount, BlueCross & BlueShield, Cigna (Larry only), First Health, HCN, Medicare, Medicaid, Multiplan, TriCare, & WPS. Just as a reminder: new deductibles start January 1, 2006. Most insurance's do offer out of network benefits. If you are not sure whether we are in or out of network, please call me at (414)571-9146 and I would be more than happy to call and find out what your benefits are. We also offer payment plans as well as cash basis appointments. Please do not neglect your body; we are willing to work with you to meet your needs.

### Medicare News

Therapy Caps to be effective January 1, 2006

At this time, beginning January 1, 2006 the therapy caps will go back into effect. The cap limits outpatient physical, occupational, and speech therapy to \$1740 per year. Legislators will be working to repeal or change the cap when congress is back in session. You can help by contacting your representatives.

Effective January 1, 2006, Medicare has raised the annual part B deductible from

\$110 to \$124. If you already have not heard Medicare has new coverage for prescription drugs. To receive Medicare prescription drug coverage, you must enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan. Medicare offers three different plans to choose from. Enrollment began November 15, 2006 and will go through May 15, 2006.

*"If you are interested in enrolling in the Medicare drug prescription plan, please be sure to do so by the deadline. (May 15, 2006)"*

If you decide to join, your costs will vary, depending on the plan you choose. Coverage is as follows: Pay a monthly premium (generally around \$32 for the year 2006). A yearly deductible of \$250, after that has been met plan members pay 25% of eligible drug cost up to \$2,250.00. Once your total out-of-pocket costs for drugs reach \$3,600, you then pay 5% of the costs and Medicare picks up 95% of the costs for the remainder of the year.

It is up to the plan member if they choose to enroll in a Medicare drug prescription plan. Medicare Supplement plans also have prescription drug coverage also. You may contact your agent to find out if your supplement plan offers this coverage. If you are interested in enrolling in the Medicare

drug prescription plan, please be sure to do so by the deadline. Joining the plan when you are first eligible will qualify you for a lower monthly premium rather than waiting to join until later. Those not enrolling in a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan by May 15, 2006 will be subject to late enrollment penalties.

### Limited Income Assistance

You may have received a letter and an application from the Social Security Administration stating that you may be eligible to get help paying for your prescription drugs. Medicare and the Social Security Administration are working together to help people with lower incomes. If you have income under \$14,355 (individual) and \$19,245 (couple) you should fill out the application and mail it in to receive the extra help you may be eligible for.

### Additional Information

For limited incomes contact Social Security Administration at:

1-800-772-1213 or visit [www.ssa.gov/prescriptionhelp](http://www.ssa.gov/prescriptionhelp)

For Information about Medicare prescription drug coverage

1-800-Medicare  
Elder Care Locator at  
1-800-677-1116  
[www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov)

## New Year's Resolutions?

A couple of common sense reminders

Well, now that you have gotten over the break-up of Nick and Jessica, it's time to think about your New Year's resolution. If you like many of us, your resolution will include exercising or dieting or both. I just wanted to offer a few common sense tips as reminders on how to help eliminate the few extra holiday pounds. I know we have all heard these before, but it just goes to show, that as all the fad diets and new exercise routines come and go, it always comes down to Calories In minus Calories Out.

1. Stay active during the winter. We all know that exercise not only will burn calories, but has too many positive benefits on health to be mentioned here.
2. Eat a healthy breakfast. Oatmeal or a natural grain cereal is a great start to the day. Avoid the high fat and high carbohydrate breakfasts.
3. Don't starve yourself or skip meals. Instead, try a snack of fruits and vegetables or another healthy choice. This will keep you from being hungry all day, and over-eating for dinner.
4. Drink lots of water. Avoid sodas and high calorie alcoholic drinks.

M & M Physical Therapy is once again offering free evaluations for exercise programs following the Holiday season. If you are having any reservations or questions about how to begin your exercise program give us a call. We will be offering these free sessions until March 15th, 2006. This gives you a good opportunity to discuss any pain you might experience with exercise or just ask for suggestions on maximizing the benefit from your current exercise routine. Just call to schedule your free evaluation and mention that you saw the offer in this newsletter. In addition to this free evaluation, we will also be offering discounted sessions at the YMCA for instruction in specific exercises and techniques custom tailored to each individual's needs.

## Exercise of the month: Cat/Camel

This month's exercise is a good one to help keep the joints of the spine loose and moving properly. It also works to stretch some of the postural muscles of the body's trunk. This exercise can safely be performed every day by people who feel stiffness in the spine. It will help to preserve and even improve spinal range of motion and flexibility. If you have any pain, numbness or tingling in the arms or legs you should consult your physical therapist before performing this, or any other exercise.



Start on your hands and knees, and tighten your stomach muscles by pulling your belly button up towards the ceiling.



Next, arch your back like an 'angry cat' keeping your stomach muscles pulled tight. Try to push your mid back up to the ceiling and stretch your shoulder blades as far apart as possible.



Finally, let gravity cause your spine to sag as far as you can, take a few deep breaths and return to the starting position.

Hold each position for around 10 seconds and repeat the whole exercise 3-6 times. Do this every morning for several weeks and you'll find that your back will feel looser and your ROM will improve.

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Now, this theory may or may not be correct. But what is obvious to anyone who routinely treats patients with arthritis is that complaints increase when there are *changes* in the weather. What many health care providers theorize is that sudden or drastic changes in humidity and pressure (up or down) that are sufficient to cause changes of the joint space have the potential to result in pain and stiffness.

So, while you may feel relief of arthritis stiffness when you travel to Arizona from Wisconsin for one week, it most likely would not be permanent relief if you relocated there. Your body would establish an equilibrium to the Arizona climate, and changes in the environment there would result in increasing or decreasing symptoms, just as they do in Wisconsin.

The good news is that these weather changes only influence the *symptoms*. The resulting increase in joint pain and stiffness is not leading to damage of the joint, just discomfort and decreased ROM for the patient.

It is obvious that all patients are affected differently. Each person must develop their own unique treatment plan utilizing medicine, exercise, and activity modification to manage pain. You should get advice from your doctor or rheumatologist, physical therapist, or any other health care professional that you trust. It's also a good idea to keep a notebook with details of how your symptoms are affected by changes in the weather, changes in medication, or activities and exercises. This can help you and your doctor or physical therapist develop a more effective treatment plan.