

[Sale](#)[What's On](#)[What's New](#)[Community](#)[Kids](#)[Fashion](#)[Food](#)[Gift Guide](#)[Home](#)[Health](#)[Beauty](#)[Top Tips](#)[Competitions](#)[Magazine Mailing List](#)

## Health

### Women's Health

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#### Women's Health

#### The Health Benefits of Physiotherapy

There are many conditions affecting women that your local physiotherapist is qualified to assess and treat. Some examples include osteoporosis, arthritis, incontinence and exercise and fitness.

#### Osteoporosis

More than two million Australians have osteoporosis. In short, one in two women and one in three men over 60 will suffer an osteoporotic fracture in Australia. Adequate calcium intake, vitamin D and regular exercise are important factors in maintaining bone health.\*

Osteoporosis is a condition in which the bones become fragile and brittle, leading to a higher risk of fractures (breaks or cracks) than in normal bone. The most common sites are bones in the hip, spine, wrist, ribs, pelvis and upper arm. There are usually no signs or symptoms until a fracture happens - this is why osteoporosis is often called the 'silent disease'.

Physiotherapists can instruct you on the appropriate weight bearing exercise necessary to promote strong bones. Balance exercises help prevent falls. Rehabilitation following a fracture is also carried out by a Physiotherapist.

\*The Burden of Brittle Bones, produced by the Department of Medicine, University of Melbourne, Footscray, Victoria 3011 (2007).

#### Arthritis

Osteoarthritis occurs when the usually smooth cartilage covering the bone ends, thins and become rough. This can result in joint pain. A common misconception is that osteoarthritis is a 'wear and tear' disease.

Physiotherapists treat the affected joints using joint mobilization and soft tissue massage. Electrotherapy helps reduce inflammation. Prescription of the correct exercises prevents the flare up of symptoms.

### Incontinence

Incontinence is any unwanted or involuntary leakage of urine, no matter how small. It commonly occurs in women after pregnancy and childbirth, as a result of a stretched and weakened pelvic floor.

Physiotherapists are trained to teach patients how to strengthen their pelvic floor muscles, thereby alleviating the embarrassing symptoms of incontinence.

### Exercise and fitness

It is more accurate to say that 'if you don't use them you lose them'. All of the above conditions can be treated with exercise. Other conditions that will benefit from exercise include cardiovascular conditions, weight related conditions and pain resulting from posture abnormalities.

A physiotherapist assesses and advises patients on the best forms of exercise. They can also assess and treat injuries sustained during sporting activities. Naturally, treatment depends on the nature of the injury.

For more information on how physiotherapy can help with women's health issues, log on to [www.stivesphysio.com.au](http://www.stivesphysio.com.au)

Or visit the St Ives Physiotherapy and Sports Therapy Centre located in the Loft, above the Market Room, St Ives Shopping Village. Bookings for an assessment can be made by calling 9144 1118.

[Back to Top](#)

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