



Matt Poulter, co-director at The Chiropractic Centre, Clifton



Bristol-based consultant neurosurgeon Nitin Patel



Sports scientist Penny Porter, who has a practice in Henbury

these muscle groups, then the overall stability and natural positioning can change. This can result in your upper back and shoulders coming forward into a slouching posture.

“When the strength between your abdominals and lower back is not at an optimum level, the pelvis can be pulled forwards or backwards, resulting in a change in the natural curvature of the lower back. These changes to the vertebrae, discs and surrounding joints may lead to pain.”

**■ BRISTOL-BASED CONSULTANT
NEUROSURGEON NITIN PATEL, SPECIALISES IN
BACK SURGERY**

“Health of the spine is all about prevention and the idea of core stability is proven in many research papers. It allows good, strong movement and sporting activities without causing injury and it will reduce the risk of injury.

“Core exercises are absolutely vital for spinal health. The spine allows you to flex and move and supports body weight and it is designed to keep you balanced, but it is also prone to injury because of the load.

“There are two groups of muscles concerned with the spine. The superficial muscles move the spine in various directions, while the deep muscles, so-called core muscles, actually resist movement in a way because they prevent excessive movement in any direction. If the core is not strong enough, it’s that excessive movement that causes injury.

“Back pain is the commonest condition of the spine, not necessarily seen by surgeons, though we see a fair proportion, but most cases are seen by physios and other primary care therapists like osteopaths and chiropractors. These cases shouldn’t get to us because 90 per cent can be managed by those therapists.

“If a person has a sedate job sitting in the car all day, or in an office with poor posture – perhaps they are putting on weight and smoking – all of these things will eventually start causing degeneration of the spine.

“Posture is very important. People with poor posture will have uneven wear of their discs and joints. The curves of the spine are designed to influence good balance and if someone is sitting at a desk and their posture is too far forward because they have never adjusted their chair correctly and their head is slightly forward, eventually the discs in the neck will wear unevenly because of that pressure – and that’s due to muscles not being used properly.

“Core stability and general good posture is very important as part of rehab after an operation. It allows people to recover much more quickly from surgery and re-enforces their view about how important these things are.

“After surgery I tend to send my patients to physiotherapists or chiropractors – whoever knows that patient – usually about four weeks after surgery to regain their muscles strength.

“They will have lost a lot of strength preceding surgery because of the pain. We can cure them of the pain with the operation, but they’ve lost core stability and postural stance and, when they are out of pain, those muscles have to be retrained. There is a lot of lost ground to cover.

“Each surgeon will have their own views as to

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