Rowing is a sport enjoyed by all ages and abilities, from school to club rowing, through to state and national representative, as well as masters and Paralympic categories. It’s a physically challenging sport, requiring strength, power as well as a high and anaerobic capacities. However, with challenge brings reward and it’s an enjoyable sport be a part of.

As with any sport, there is always a risk of injury and it’s important to recognise either what you can do to avoid it or if it’s already occurred; manage and rehabilitate it. Evidence shows us that if you completely remove an injured athlete from training, this is predictive of injury recurrence. Therefore, it is important to keep up with normal training loads whilst avoiding aggravating positions and prolonged rest.

**Common Injuries we see with rowers are:**

- Low back pain
- Chest wall injuries
- Shoulder instability
- Knee pain
- Wrist injuries

**How can Pilates help?**

Pilates is an excellent way to not only to address and retrain faulty movement patterns but also challenge dynamic strength and stability. Working alongside a clinical Pilates physiotherapist means that your injury is understood, and your program is individualised.

**Some considerations for rowers include:**

- Specificity in core rehabilitation training
- The reformer provides the ability to challenge the core in similar postures of that required in the boat.
- Allows co-contraction of the both the spinal flexors and extensors.
- Can coincide core exercise with scapular stability.
- Can challenge multidirectional work (e.g. adding rotation)

**Glenohumeral joint and scapular stabilisation**

- Shoulder pain in rowers may arise due to weakness in the scapulothoracic region and overuse of muscles in the neck.
- Factors that influence Glenohumeral joint instability include weakness in the rotator cuff muscles, overactive of latissimus dorsi and tightness in the pecs and posterior shoulder capsule.

**Trunk extensor endurance**

- Spinal extensor strength is an important feature of the stroke.
- Decreased spinal extensor strength may result in excessive lumbar flexion at the catch as a rower fatigues. This can contribute to low back pain.
- Hip dissociation also important in order to achieve good lumbo-pelvic motion, as good positioning at the catch is determined by anterior rotation of the pelvis rather than an excessively flexed lumbar spine.
1. **Hip Range of Motion & Hamstring Length**

   - Improves the position of the lumbar spine at the catch, allowing for longer stroke. This also improves load through the lumbar spine.
   - Allows for good lumbo-pelvic rhythm when rocking over in the recovery phase.

2. **Thoracic and Segmental Mobility**

   Further considerations to a rower’s programming should include thoracic spine flexibility to further improve posture and range of motion. Pilates can also challenge segmental mobility (i.e. being able to control motion through each segment of the spine) which is necessary for the spine’s load bearing function. The aim here is to avoid hinging from a particular level which will unevenly distribute load through the spine.

   Have a chat to your physiotherapist if you would like to compliment your training or injury rehabilitation with Pilates. Whether or not you’re a rower or involved in another sport we can individualise your program to replicate the requirements of the sport.

**References:**