

Staying
Healthy & Saxy!

Preventing the 21 most common health-problems for saxophonists

with:
Florian Rooz



Created in collaboration with licensed medical professionals



Massive Creative

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Foreword and non-medical advice notice

Hi and welcome to “Staying healthy and Saxy”. Before you read on it’s important you understand that this eBook, though manufactured with great care and under the supervision of medical professionals, should not be considered legal medical advice! This eBook may very well help you to prevent health problems, quickly locate your problem or provide you with ideas for possible solutions, but you should always seek counsel from a certified medical professional before taking action.

Massive Creative and Florian Rooz are not libel for any damages you cause to yourself or others in case you follow advice from this program without first counseling a certified health professional.

This program is a tool to: 1: help you prevent possible health risks due to playing the saxophone. 2: Help you diagnose a health problem you’re experiencing due-to-playing and to swiftly guide you in the direction of the proper health professional that can help you in your situation.

Staying healthy and saxy

Playing the saxophone is a fantastic hobby and for a long time I never gave any serious consideration to the question of the possible health risks.

Then a friend of mine, who repairs saxophones as a hobby, played on an old saxophone he found. The instrument hadn't been cleaned for a long LONG time. And within a few hours he developed something called: "allergic pulmonary disease" sometimes also referred to as: "**Saxophone Lung**". He fell unconscious and was quickly transported to the hospital where he spend more than two months fighting for his life. Half of this time he spent in a deep coma, just inches away from death.

It sounds dramatic I know, but it really happened. Fortunately he recovered and is now fully healthy again, but I'm pretty sure he will never EVER, just put any sax to his mouth again, without first making sure it's clean.

As a teacher, with many thousands of readers and viewers world-wide, I felt I should take action and create something to help other players avoid having this type of experience. So I dove in, went into the forums, talked to the saxophone players I know and asked people about the health problems they themselves had experienced.

Initially I estimated that the list of possible health problems would be small, but after some thorough research I actually found that: not only are there roughly 26 relatively common health-issues that saxophone players run into. **I hardly talked to anybody who had not, at least, experienced one or two of them personally.** In other words: It seemed that **a rather large percentage of saxophone players. Almost a 100% of us, run into one or more of these 26 health issues at some point.**

So health risks, as a consequence of playing the sax, are very real and should be taken seriously. Especially by beginners. My hope is this eBook will help you prevent absolutely all of them. So you can stay and play: Healthy and saxy.

How to use this eBook:

This book can be read from start to finish as a novel or you can use it as a kind of encyclopedia.

The full read will give you the complete overview on the 26 issues and will also tie some of them together so you can see the connections between the problems more clearly.

If you're mainly interested in learning about one or more specific issues, then simply dive into the relevant chapters to get the specifics right away.

For each problem you'll find:

- 1: an in depth description,
- 2: the general causes,
- 3: possible aggravators (habits or circumstances that increase the chance of injury)
- 4: tips on preventing and healing the problem.

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Back issues:



Let's get started with, by far, the most common issue saxophone players run into. **Back problems!** Regardless of what type of saxophone you play. Your daily practice routine is putting serious pressure on your back. Many of us are practicing and playing for at least an hour or so every day. With some of us extending this time up to as much as 4 hours per day.

This means the strain on our backs is constant and serious. Saxophone players are a lot like athletes in this regard. And like athletes who constantly train, this constant pressure on our backs creates ample opportunity for back injuries.

So what can go wrong and what can we do to prevent it from happening?

1: Muscle pain in the lower or upper back:

Description:

The majority of episodes of acute back pains are caused by damage to the muscles and/or ligaments in the back. While “Muscle strain” may not sound like a very serious injury, the resulting back pain can be severe and is the cause of many emergency room visits each year.

When you strain or tear the muscles or ligaments in your back, the body and immune system will immediately spring into action. Millions of special cells go to work and the area around the muscles will quickly become “inflamed”. Inflammation is a natural reaction of the human body. It helps to: eliminate the initial cause of the injury, clears out necrotic (dead and damaged) cells and tissues and helps to initiate tissue repair.

The classic signs of acute inflammation are: **Pain, heat, redness, swelling and loss of function**. In other words: Your body will make it: **hurt like hell, swell the area up and make it very hard for you to move**, thus preventing us from doing any more damage. This is why inflammation is considered a mechanism of human immunity. You could say it’s a way for our body to guard against the common human stupidity of: damaging ourselves and then continuing to damage ourselves more, despite clear pain. Once an injury becomes inflamed it’s virtually impossible to ignore or continue your activity and it can take anywhere from a few days, to months to heal. In some cases it may even never heal, becoming instead a chronic condition.

When you damage your back it’s almost always instantly serious. So inflammation often follows immediately. Making it hard to walk or even stand up.

There are two common types of back muscle pain:

1: Muscle strain: Happens when a muscle is over-stretched or torn. (Mostly in the upper part)

2: Lumbar sprain: Happens when ligaments are stretched to far or torn. (Mostly in the Lower part)

In most cases it hardly matters whether you are experiencing Muscle strain or Lumbar sprain, since the treatment and prognosis for both are the same.

Causes:

The major causes for back muscle pains are: **Any type of movement that puts undue stress on the back.** Frequent causes include:

- Lifting heavy objects,
- Lifting while twisting,
- Making a sudden movement
- Falling while lifting something.

The increased risk for saxophonists is obvious. We are lifting a heavy object for a prolonged period of time every day and we're generally making sudden movements all the time while playing. Bending over as we get into the groove and many of us have the instrument hanging from our necks as we reach for a sip of water, or flick to the next page of sheet-music while practicing. A wrong move is easily made.

Fatigue in the back muscles also plays a major role. After playing for several hours our backs can be severely weakened from fatigue. In this weakened state it's far easier to sustain a back injury. So saxophonists that have intense practice regimes often spend several hours every day, walking around with their backs in a more vulnerable state.

Aggravators:

- 1: Playing on, when you're back is clearly painful/fatigued!
- 2: Paying little attention to your posture.
- 3: Habitually using improper lifting technique.
- 4: Making lots of "wrong moves".

Prevention:

1: Be conscious of the daily pressure you're putting on your back as a saxophone player.

Your back is a precious part of your body and it deserves your utmost care. Just being extra conscious and careful and using your common sense is a major step in preventing back injuries.

2: When it hurts, STOP AND REST!

Pain is a signal from the body. It's never there without a reason. When your back is starting to feel uncomfortable or you start to experience pain. Stop and give your back ample time to heal before you continue. The most common thing saxophonists say to themselves right before they contract a major back injury:

A: I just need 5 minutes more... I almost know this solo now, I just want to finish it....

B: I just have to finish this gig. Only one more song....

C: It's really starting to hurt but I just have to finish practicing this piece. I'm almost done...

Believe me! Pushing through those last 5 minutes of pain, when you think it will hurt, but you'll be fine after... That's what 95% of the people, who run into severe back problems, are doing right before they end up confined to a

bed. Sometimes for several days, months or even with a chronic back problem as a result. So I can't stress this enough: When it hurts, **STOP AND REST!**

3: Work-out to increase the strength of your back.

The modern gym has a host of options specifically developed to strengthen the many muscles of the upper and lower back. Visiting a gym twice a week and specifically exercising your back is good way to stave of potential back problems.

If you ask a personal trainer at your gym, they will often be able to provide a custom program for increasing the strength in your back.

(In case you're already experiencing pain in your back, make sure to contact a physiotherapist before you start exercising. In some cases exercise can make an existing problem worse.)

4: Mind your lifting technique.

Lift from your legs, not from your lower back as shown in the pictures below:



5: watch out with sudden or strained movements while carrying your saxophone.

Stories of back pain often begin with the phrase: **“And then I guess I made a wrong move and ...”**. It’s amazing how much we can be our own worst enemy, when it comes to back injuries. Just take a look at this very special picture below:



Now “Linda” looks lovely to be sure, but look at how she is standing. She’s on small heels making it hard to balance, with her back arched forward all the way, putting the full weight of her upper body + the saxophone on her lower back. On top of all that she’s curved her back sideways, making the strain on her lower back even bigger. I showed this picture to a doctor and he actually couldn’t imagine a more perfect pose for contracting back problems. This is one of those classic: **“and then I made a wrong move”** poses.

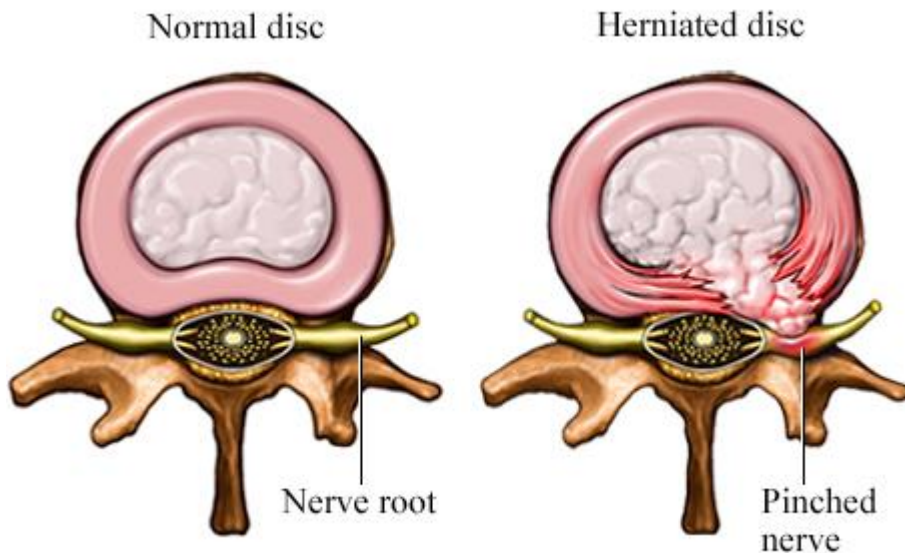
So learn from this picture, here are 3 major “sudden” movements to watch out for:

A: Standing in a way that provides unsure footing or bad balance while lifting the sax

B: Arching your back forward, putting the weight of your upper body + the sax fully on your lower back muscles.

C: Stretching your arms, pushing the sax far away from your body. This is often done for dramatic effect. It’s not terrible in itself if done for just a moment, but it increases the weight of the sax on your back a lot. If you happen to be bending over while doing this, it can combine into a large pressure on the lower back and tear something. So just be careful when doing this.

2: Herniated disc problems



Description:

Unfortunately, health care professionals do not agree on one precise definition of Herniated disc. So if you have this problem you may be confused by hearing different doctors and specialist refer to your condition as: **Torn Disc, Slipped disc, Collapsed disc, Pinched nerve, Bulging disc, Disc protrusion, Disc disease, Broken disk or Black disc.**

Forget about the terminology! This is what you need to know about it: The problem with the disks in our spine generally come in two types:

1: Nerve pain. When put under enough pressure or strain, a disk can tear or rupture and this causes them to lose some of their watery content into places it shouldn't be. This can put pressure on nearby nerves causing mild or intense pain that can radiate out to other parts of the body.

2: Disc pain. When the harder part of a disc becomes damaged it produces pain. This pain doesn't radiate out like Nerve pain, but it can still be very painful.

Causes:

Disk problems are often the result of natural, gradual wear and tear called disk degeneration. As we age, the spinal disks lose some of their watery content. This makes them less flexible and more prone to tearing and rupturing. Even under minor strains or by a sudden twist.

The extra daily pressure of prolonged saxophone playing increases the chance of disk problems over our lifetime. In addition to this increased daily wear and tear, there are three moments/situations that often first cause an acute problem to appear:

- 1: Using the back muscles, instead of the leg muscles, for lifting heavy objects.
- 2: Twisting and turning while lifting heavy objects.
- 3: Saxophone players have an increased chance to develop a herniated disc in the neck region (cervical vertebrae) due to the focused weight of the neck strap at this location.

Aggravators:

- 1: Playing on, when you're back is clearly painful/fatigued!
- 2: Paying little attention to your posture.
- 3: Habitually using improper lifting technique.
- 4: Making use of a badly fitting/supporting neck strap.

Prevention:

1: Be conscious of the daily pressure you're putting on your back as a saxophone player.

Your back is a very precious part of your body and it deserves your utmost care. Just being conscious and careful and using your common sense is a major step in preventing back injuries.

2: When it hurts, STOP AND REST!

Pain is signal from the body. It is never there without a reason. When your back is starting to feel uncomfortable or you start to experience pain. Stop and give your back ample time to heal before you continue. The most common things saxophonists say to themselves right before they have a major back injury:

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Believe me! Pushing through those last 5 minutes of pain, when you think it will hurt, but you'll be fine after. That's what 95% of the people who run into severe back problems are doing right before they end up confined to a bed for several days, months or sometimes even with a chronic back problem as a result. So I can't stress this enough: When it hurts, STOP AND REST!

3: Work-out to increase the strength of your back.

Like with muscle problems in the back, the best way to prevent disk problems is a healthy amount of exercise. Your spine is supported completely by the surrounding muscles, so keeping them healthy and in

shape helps to shield your spinal disks from harm. Also, a healthy amount of movement and stretching keeps your disks flexible and reduces the chance of a herniated disk.

The modern gym has a host of options specifically developed to strengthen the many muscles of the upper and lower back. Visiting a gym twice a week and specifically exercising your back is a good way to stave off potential back problems.

If you ask a trainer at your gym, they will often be able to provide a custom program for increasing the strength in your back. Be sure to keep enough recovery time though to prevent overuse.

4: Mind your lifting technique.

Lift from your legs, not from your lower back as shown in the pictures below:



5: get a well-fitting neck strap or use another support system like the Sax holder.

3: Neck burn

Description:

There are literally hundreds of manufacturers and suppliers of saxophone neck straps. Most of them use their own unique design and combination of materials. This brings us both great choice, and at the same time, some potential health problems. With the quality of designs and materials varying widely, there is a good chance of running into a strap that will give you “Neck Burn”.

Basically, Neck Burn is **irritation of the skin in the neck due to the use of a bad neck-strap**. Like with a pair of shoes that cuts into your heels after half an hour of walking, so can neck-straps cause real damage. Starting with a mild irritation of the skin (burning sensation) and steadily progressing to more serious problems like a bad rash.

Causes:

The most common cause of Neck Burn is a bad combination of materials and skin. Every human being is different and we all have different tolerances. One person may enjoy a rougher material on his/her neck and have no problem at all wearing it for long periods of time, while another person develops red and irritated skin within minutes using the exact same neck strap.

A second common cause are: allergies. This happens more often with neck-straps made out of syntactic materials.

Aggravators:

- 1: Continuing to play when the neck is obviously getting irritated and painful.
- 2: Not cleaning your neck-strap regularly.

Healing & prevention:

If a strap is causing you pain or a rash. Stop using it immediately.

If you are developing a rash or an itch which does not go away by itself after about 24 hours. Call you doctor!

1: Take more time to test a neck-strap before buying.

A good store will allow you to test a neck-strap thoroughly before you buy it. However, most beginners do not test it in action at all. They mostly just put it around their necks for a few seconds, try the sax on it for half a riff and then declare the strap either good or bad. Like with a pair of new shoes, any problems will only become apparent after quite some time using the strap. So move into the sound booth with your potential new neck-strap and play for at least 20 or-so minutes. This will give you a much better indication of whether the strap may cause you neck-burn.

2: Clean your Neck strap regularly.

You probably wash your clothes regularly, but funny enough, many saxophone players hardly ever clean their neck strap. Something about “earned sweat” is sometimes given as the reason. Though that’s all fun and good, the build-up of organic stuff on your strap can be a factor in causing allergic reactions and irritation. If you have a small wound for example, playing with a dirty neck strap can increase the risk of infection.

(Neck straps can also be a factor in herniating spinal disc problems (page 15 for more details)

Lip, mouth, teeth and lung problems



The second most common area for saxophone players to develop health problems is the area of the mouth and lungs. Which is not surprising as much of the activity of playing the sax influences this area of the body in some way.

The mouth is a very special area of the body. It's one of the most sensitive, most multi-functional parts of us. And with so much going on at the same time, it is an area where even a relatively small problem can cause a lot of grief. Just a small wound on your tongue, for example, can make it hard to play the sax for a few days. Making it painful to: talk, eat, drink, kiss, etc. So preventing problems here is generally well worth the effort.

Let's start by looking at the area of the lips:

1: Dry, split or cracked lips



Description:

Many beginner saxophone players experience problems with a dry or cracked lower lip when they first start playing, but there are also plenty long-time players who develop these problems with the lower lip periodically.

The lip is generally very dry and keeps cracking / splitting creating very tender and painful spots, making it almost impossible to play the saxophone.

Causes:

Dry lips are generally caused by the weather, especially the cold, but they can also be caused by a lack of vitamins and excessive licking of the lips. Saxophone playing in particular however, can also cause dry lips. So our daily practice increases the chance of dry lips. Once we have a cracked lip, the daily stress of playing can make it hard for us to heal effectively. So a cracked lip can create a rather problematic vicious circle for a saxophone

player. It also creates some risk of infection, which can lead to a myriad of other problems. So taking a few steps to prevent can save us a lot of trouble down the road.

Aggravators:

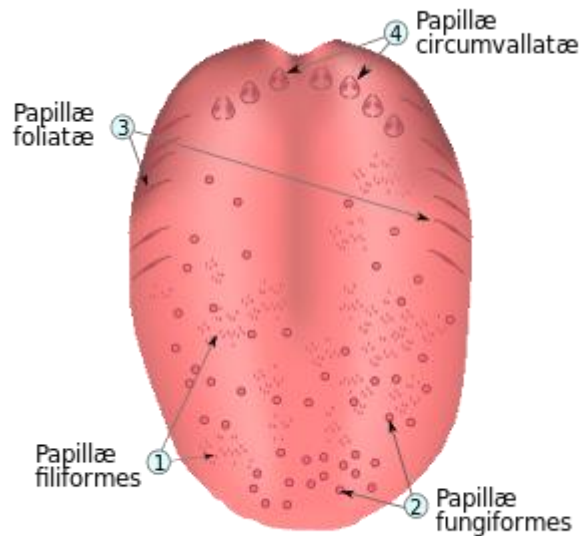
- 1: Continuing to play with a cracked lip
- 2: Over-using lip balm
- 3: Living in cold climates

Prevention:

As a saxophone player, it pays off to take extra care and prevent dry and cracked lips. Here's how you can decrease the chance of it happening:

- 1: Shield your lips from any extreme weather conditions. Continuous changes in temperature and air conditions tend to increase the chance of dry lips. Lips can sunburn and tend to lose their moisture in dry air conditions. So in sunny weather, use a lip balm (moderately) to keep your lips moist in the sun. In Cold or extremely dry weather a balm or scarf can help shield your lips from the weather.
- 2: Eat enough vitamins. If you're experiencing dry lips regularly without there being any obvious external reasons, it can be a sign your diet is somewhat lacking in vitamins. Increasing your daily intake of fresh fruits can help to keep your lips healthier.

2: Painful enlarged papillae (taste bud) on the tongue



Description:

Your tongue is full of papillae (taste- buds) and through different causes a papillae can get enlarged and painful. Especially when this happens on the tip of the tongue. It can make it hard to eat and virtually impossible to play the saxophone until it's healed.

Causes:

1: Just like small traumas from: biting, eating something too hot, or foods that are too acidic, the constant vibrating of the tip of the reed against the tongue can cause an irritated papillae.

2: Excessive smoking can cause irritation of the tongue, increasing the risk of enlarged papillae.

3: There are several (more serious) medical conditions which can cause enlarged papilla. If the papilla are not healing by themselves after a few days, **always contact your doctor!**

Aggravators:

- 1: Smoking
- 2: Bad oral hygiene
- 3: Overly Spicy or acidic foods
- 4: Tongue biting
- 5: Sharp/ragged teeth.

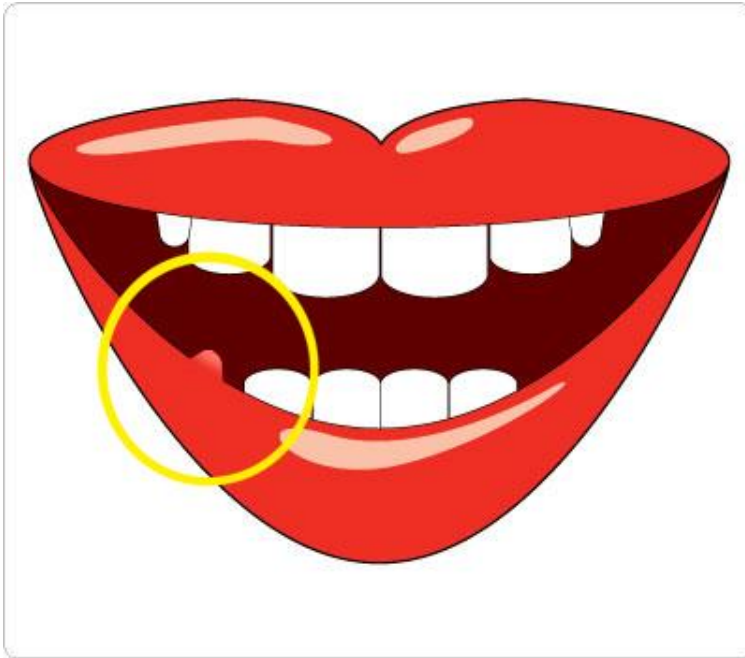
Healing & prevention:

In most cases, if left time to heal, the problem will heal itself in a few days.

You can decrease your chances of developing enlarged papillae by:

- 1: Not smoking.
- 2: Good oral hygiene and healthy foods.
- 3: Avoiding hot, spicy or acidic foods.
- 4: U can use mouthwash to rinse and ease the pain.
- 5: Avoid biting your tongue.
- 6: If you have this problem regularly you can try increasing your level of vitamin B12 intake. Fruits like prunes and dates are good for this.

3: Oral mucocele on lips



Description:

An oral mucocele is basically a small lump (cyst) on the inside of your lip. Mucocele are generally harmless and go away by themselves after a while. Though they generally do not hurt, they can cause pain while playing the sax, making it difficult to play saxophone for a while. Mucocele form when the duct of a salivary gland gets blocked (usually through some physical trauma). When the saliva produced by the gland can't enter the mouth through the duct, it piles up, forming a small lump.

Mucocele may have these characteristics:

- Movable and painless
- Soft, round, dome-shaped
- Pearly or semi-clear surface or bluish in color
- 2 to 10 millimeters in diameter

Causes:

Mucocele can be created by any type of physical trauma to your lips. Biting or sucking on your lips a lot, a blow to the face, a scratch from a hard type of food.

The constant vibrating of the reed against the lower lip can also irritate the salivary ducts and create mucocele. Especially beginners, who have not yet build up a tolerance in the lower lip, can experience mucocele if they push their practice too hard.

Like with most physical problems, some people may be more prone to developing mucocele than others.

Aggravators:

- 1: Any physical trauma to the lips
- 2: Continuing to play the saxophone when the lips are clearly fatigued / hurting.

Prevention/treatment:

Most mucocele go away by themselves without treatment, but if they keep enlarging, consult a doctor! He can remove the gland, using a small surgical procedure, or help a new duct to form, solving the problem.

4: Sleepy upper lip, sensitive front teeth and gums

Description:

Some sax players experience chronic health problems with their front teeth and the gums in the front of the mouth. No matter how well you brush and keep the mouth clean, the gums in the front of the mouth remain: irritated, sensitive and will often bleed a bit while brushing. The front teeth may also have a tendency to become slightly discolored.

Causes:

The health of our teeth and gums depends on a delicate balance of active bacteria, in our saliva, and good dental care. Woodwinds and brass players, over time, tend to develop extra muscle strength in their lips. This is nothing bad in itself, but in some cases this gradual change in muscle strength can cause players to start sleeping with their mouth slightly open and breathing through the mouth while sleeping. This means during the entire night (7+ hours) the front teeth and gums are dry and are not protected by the saliva. Giving bad bacteria free range.

The main problem is that most players don't make the connection with their playing, and most doctors and dentists also don't make the connection. Sending players home with the advice to brush more and floss more, and maybe use a mouthwash. Unfortunately no amount of brushing or flossing can overcome several hours of complete dryness every night.

So players get stuck with a chronic problem that keeps being miss diagnosed. At the same time the situation can increase the likelihood of other dental problems and infection.

Aggravators:

- 1: Bad dental hygiene
- 2: bad maintenance/cleaning of your mouthpiece
- 3: Eating a lot of sweet foods

Prevention & treatment:

Fortunately this condition can be easily and quickly cured. It does take some effort and focus though. The key is to teach yourself to sleep with a closed mouth, breathing through your nose, and keeping the front teeth and gums well lubricated in your saliva as much as possible until fully healed.

During the day keep your mouth closed as much as possible and every hour or so, push some saliva forward in your mouth and wash your front teeth and gums in it for a minute or so.

When you go to sleep, focus consciously on keeping your mouth closed. If you feel your mouth is opening, close it again consciously. Sometimes it can help to have your partner or spouse observe you and wake you up every time your mouth opens a bit. Keep this up until you've formed a new habit and you sleep with your mouth firmly closed again.

Combined with good dental hygiene (brushing at least twice a day) the problem will usually subside within 5 to 10 days.

5: Getting punched in the face by a saxophone:



Description:

Even though it sounds rather ridiculous, every year many saxophone players get injured by a punch in the face. When the doctor asks them what happened, they often say they fell down some stairs or hit a closet door, but the real culprit, is their very own saxophone.

The damage can vary from: a split lip, or broken teeth, to losing or injuring and eye. Mouthpieces are made of a very hard materials that can do real damage.

Causes:

Saxophone players position their mouthpieces to be perfectly in line with their mouth. So it's easy to play. However, this also puts the sax at the perfect angle to do some major damage in case we make an unexpected move. Often because of one wrong step, or letting go of the saxophone in the wrong moment, we can cause the sax to swing around on the neck chord. The angle and weight of the sax can give the neck a lot of forward momentum and its perfect position, in front of the mouth, than does the rest.

Aggravators:

- 1: Semi careless handling of the saxophone
- 2: inexperienced people holding a saxophone
- 3: Drunk people at parties "trying" your sax for just a second

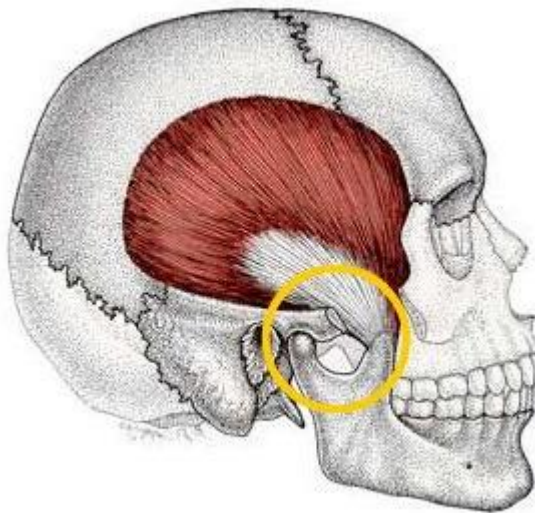
Prevention & treatment

1: Though small accidents like this are virtually impossible to prevent. Being conscious of the fact that several people lose an eye or get a severe lip injury from this every year, can help to handle the saxophone just a bit more carefully.

2: Minimize walking around with the saxophone on the chord around your neck and take the sax of the chord when moving around.

3: Be very careful with drunk people using or trying a saxophone in combination with a neck chord. Drunk people's sudden movements are perfect to create this type of accident.

6: T.M.J. (Temporomandibular Joint Dysfunction) sometimes also called “floating jaw syndrome”.



Description:

T.M.J. is an umbrella term covering pain in the chewing muscles + pain and dysfunction in the joints that connect: the jaw to the skull. T.M.J. is a complex problem which presents in different ways each time, but in general people experience pain (can be severe) and the movement of their jaw can become restricted. This is often accompanied by cracking noises whenever the jaw is moved. T.M.J. patients can also experience Tinnitus (hearing phantom sounds) and a loss of hearing in one, or both ears.

TMJ is a serious condition and though not life threatening, it can be detrimental to the quality of life and devastating to any saxophone player's career. If you experience any of the following symptoms or a combination of them, **go see you doctor immediately:**

- 1: Pain around or under the area of your ears (usually on one side)
- 2: Clicking or scratching sound when moving your jaw (usually on one side)
- 3: If you feel your jaw has become strangely stuck or restricted in its movement, or if you feel afraid it might somehow "snap stuck" if you, for example, chew hard or exert a lot of pressure while biting on something.
- 4: buzzing or ringing in your ears,
- 5: Loss or a significant change in your hearing ability. (Sometimes this can happen in direct response to moving your jaw a certain way).

Causes:

1: There are no well-defined causes for T.M.J. However it is agreed that it can, at-least, partly be caused by wear and tear on the jaw joints. So saxophone players, who put considerable pressure on this joint daily, run a slightly higher risk of developing T.M.J. over their life-time.

2: Trauma (a hit to the head) is also known to cause TMJ. This is often referred to as P.T.M.J. (Post-traumatic T.M.J.).

3: There is some speculation that a genetic predisposition for T.M.J. might run in some families, but as yet this has never been adequately proven. Historically many families lived of the same trade for generations. This is especially true for musicians. So it may also be that: a father and son saxophone players who both contract T.M.J, did so because they both played saxophone and not because of any genetic predisposition they share.

Prevention & healing

1: Since the causes of T.M.J. are not exactly known it is not possible to give any specific prevention tip but one:

Realize that playing your saxophone hobby can be a co-factor in developing T.M.J. in the long run. So be careful. If you feel pain around your jaw, REST! If you experience trauma to your jaw in any way, be careful to let it heal properly before you put excessive pressure on it again.

T.M.J. is not rare. About 20-30% of adults are affected by it in some degree.

7: Painful throat stretching

Description:

All human bodies are unique and so are our necks and throats. Most of us have absolutely no neck or throat problems when playing the saxophone, but apparently a small group of people can experience a problem with the neck or throat.

It often manifests as part of the neck bulging out when playing the saxophone. The area that stretches can become painful.

Causes:

This appears to be a purely physical problem. You either have it or you don't, but it's a very rare thing.

Healing & prevention

If you experience a painful feeling in your throat when playing **consult your doctor**.

8: Face stretching (fable)



Description:

We've all seen video's or pictures of jazz players like Dizzy Gillespie and it's no secret that both woodwind and Brass players put a lot of extra pressure on our cheeks every day when we play. The reason I include this issue is, that apparently, quite a few young kids believe that: playing a saxophone or trumpet, can stretch your face out over time, making us look all stretched out. I literally got parents emailing me every once in a while about this, asking me for reassurance that this really isn't the case right?

The answer to the question: Can playing the saxophone alter your face? Is actually YES! However in 99999 out of 100000 cases it doesn't. And this has everything to do with proper technique. If you use proper technique, you run little to no risk of altering your face in any significant way. Sure, a few of your facial muscles will become a bit stronger, but it won't be visually noticeable.

However if you puff out (or don't hold in) your cheeks properly when playing, than you can stretch them out over time, making your cheeks more saggy. There is however, a medical reason why some players have no choice

but to do this. **Ehlers-Danlos syndrome** is a hereditary affliction that makes soft tissues (Like the cheeks and skin) unusually stretchy. The famous Trumpet player Dizzy Gillespie had this affliction and it is the reason for his unusual, and very famous look.

But a healthy person runs no real risk of altering their face in any significant way by playing a woodwind or brass instrument.

Ear/hearing problems:



Spending a lot of time on-stage surrounded by powerful speakers or playing in the middle of the brass-section of a big-band or orchestra is no small stress on the ears. Protecting our ears is an ongoing and serious battle for any musician. Saxophone players, being part of the bras family, wield an instrument that produces a lot of decibels. Enough to create permanent hearing damage if used incorrectly. **So what can go wrong and how do we avoid it?**

1: Accelerated gradual hearing loss

Description:

All humans naturally lose some of their hearing abilities as we age. Young children can hear more high frequencies than adults. Generally this gradual loss creates no real problems, but in our increasingly loud world, with many youngsters attending big summer festivals and raves where the sound volume can be shockingly high, we are all at an increased risk of hearing loss due to trauma.

Playing the saxophone daily in combination with partying in loud places every weekend, creates a continuing stream of loud environments for our ears. This can gradually damage your hearing. Not so fast that you would quickly notice a difference, but fast enough so in a span of only a few years, you can suddenly get to a situation where you'd actually start noticing a big difference.

If you're experiencing one or more of the following symptoms you probably have ear damage already. If not. These are the real everyday problems that hearing loss bring. And they are well worth avoiding.

Signs of hearing loss:

Socially:

- I require frequent repetition
- Have difficulty following conversations involving more than 2 people
- Think that other people sound muffled or like they are mumbling
- Have difficulty hearing in noisy situations like conferences, restaurants, malls, or crowded meeting rooms

- Have trouble hearing children or woman
- Have your TV or Radio turned up to a high volume (to hear the details)
- Sometimes answer or respond wrongly in conversations (miss hearing people)
- Have ringing in your ears generally (or start to notice it when surroundings are quite)
- Read lips or more intently watch people's faces when they speak to me.

Emotionally:

- Feel stressed out from straining to hear what others say
- Feel annoyed at other people because it's hard to understand them
- Feel embarrassed to meet new people, or from misunderstanding what others are saying
- Feel nervous about trying to hear and understand
- Withdraw from social situations that you once enjoyed because of difficulty hearing.

Causes / Aggravators:

- Being in loud environments without ear protection regularly.
- To little rest for the ears (silence) after extended loud experiences.
- Once we have a hearing problem, we often compensate (and make it worse) by turning the volume up on everything around us.
Compounding the damage every day.

Healing & prevention:

Unfortunately hearing damage is often permanent and, at least at the current moment in time, irreversible in 90/95% of all cases. That is to say physically there is no way to restore your body's own hearing function. However, there are a great many hearing aids available these days. With the help of a good hearing aid, your hearing may be restored to a 100%. About 5% of patients with hearing problems can recover through surgery.

Most people with hearing loss are unaware of their condition. Family doctors often do not regularly check for hearing loss and we tend to naturally compensate by favoring one ear or by lip-reading.

Research demonstrated hearing aids are clearly associated with impressive improvements in the social, emotional, psychological, and physical well-being of people with hearing loss in all hearing loss categories from mild to severe. Specifically, hearing aid usage is positively related to the following quality of life issues. Hearing loss treatment was shown to improve:

- Earning power
- Communication in relationships
- Intimacy and warmth in family relationships
- ease in communication
- Emotional stability
- Sense of control over life events
- Perception of mental functioning
- Physical health

2: Tinnitus



Description:

The word Tinnitus comes from the Latin: *tinnitus aurium*, meaning: “ringing in the ears” and that is literally what Tinnitus is. Often also referred to as phantom hearing, it causes us to hear: ringing, sizzling, popping, brimming or beeping in the ears without any sound being actually there. The volume of the phantom sounds can be very low, making it only noticeable when in quite places, but it can also be deafeningly loud. Making it impossible to hear our surroundings over the sound of the ringing.

Tinnitus can be hugely debilitating for anybody, but for a working musician it can sometimes be the end of a career.

Causes:

Though I will focus on causes related to sound in general and the playing of the sax. Tinnitus is also known to be caused by many other causes. Namely: diseases, physical trauma to the head, neuro degenerative problems and emotional stress. So if you're experiencing Tinnitus it's important to **consult your doctor to determine the cause of your problem**. In many cases the causes cannot be established definitively.

For saxophone players and other musicians, tinnitus is mostly related to hearing loss and trauma to the inner ear by repeated explosive volumes. Most of us have experienced mild forms of tinnitus. That beeeep you hear in your ears after a night of clubbing is technically Tinnitus.

Aggravators:

- Being in loud environments without ear protection regularly.
- To little rest for the ears (silence) after extended loud experiences
- Once we have a hearing problem, we often compensate (and make it worse) by turning the volume up on everything around us.
Compounding the damage every day.

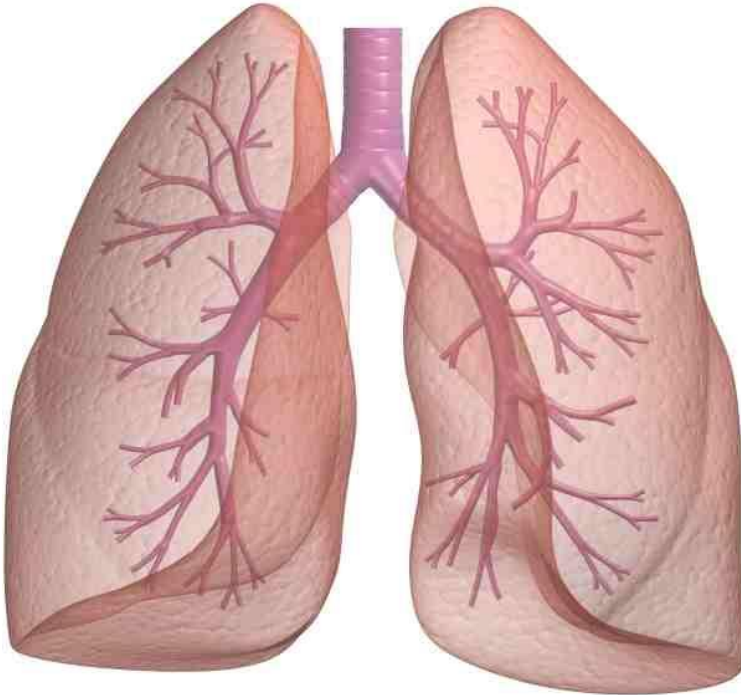
Healing & prevention:

Like most other hearing problems, tinnitus is often permanent, only in a very small amount of cases can the problem be solved through surgery. Science is making advances in technology aimed at solving the problems of tinnitus though. So if you have it, it's well worth asking your doctor if he knows of any recent advances.

Prevention of tinnitus comes down to protecting your ears as much as possible.

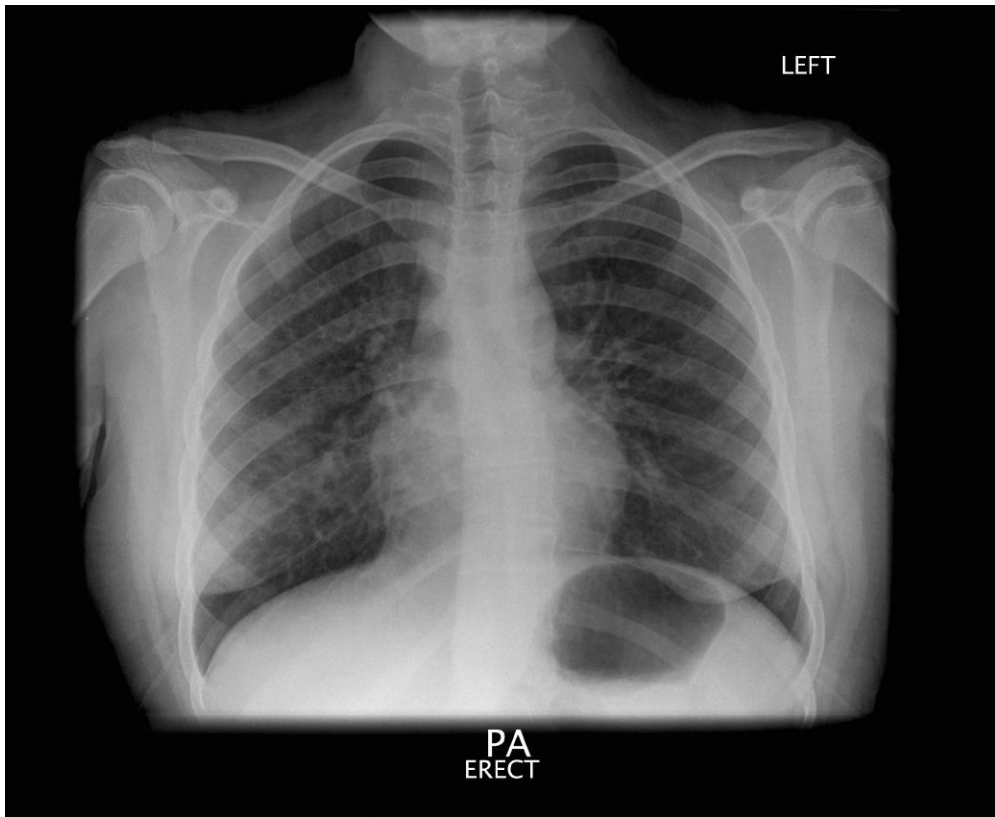
- Wear ear pops in loud places
- Be careful with head phones
- Give your ears ample rest if you were exposed to loud volumes.

Lung problems



Now that we know exactly what can go wrong around the mouth and face it's time to move into the area of the lungs. Fortunately there are very few things that can go wrong here. However, the lung problems that can, and do, happen in relation to the saxophone are all very serious.

1: Hypersensitivity pneumonitis



Description:

HP is more commonly known amongst musicians as “saxophone lung”. This is a container term that includes a wide variation of medical conditions involving a range of harmful bacteria. The essence of H.P. however, is that it involves an acute allergic reaction to the infection of the lungs by a bacteria fungus or mold.

Researchers found in 2010 that as much as 4 harmful microbes are commonly found in the warm, moist environment inside most wind instruments.

The reaction to breathing in these bacteria can be deadly. As I mentioned in the opening of his program. A good friend of mine contracted a case of H.P. and ended up in the hospital for over two months. Over half that time he spent in a deep coma, inches away from death. Needing an artificial lung to keep him alive. Though not all cases of H.P. are so severe.

In other cases, players can get a heavy cough that won't go away and won't respond to antibiotics.

The most dangerous variation of HP can develop in 4 to 6 hours after exposure to the bacteria. Symptoms include: fever, chills, coughing, chest tightness, shortness of breath, a rash, swelling of the neck and a headache. If you think you might have contracted H.P. **Go see a doctor right away.**

Causes:

1: Breathing in, or contracting through the lips, harmful bacteria, fungi or molds from a saxophone.

Aggravators:

1: If your immune system is, for whatever reason, already weakened at the moment of exposure it increases the chance of a bad reaction.

2: Smoking and drinking

3: Fatigue

Prevention/treatment:

1: Clean your instrument:

Prevention of HP is one of the best reasons why we want to clean and sterilize our saxophone regularly as best we can. This means not just swiping it shiny every once in a while, but cleaning your mouthpiece, neck and horn thoroughly every few days. Your mouthpiece preferably after every practice.

2: Replace your reeds regularly.

Reeds are also a great place for microbes to grow. It's important to clean and dry your reed after every play, and if a reed shows black stripes or distinct darker spots. Throw it away and replace it!

2: Chest pains after practice

Description:

Beginner saxophone players can experience some aches or a tingly feeling around the chest area after playing for longer periods. This is natural and nothing to worry about. Just don't push it too hard.

Causes:

Unusual pressure on the lungs from playing.

Aggravators:

Not taking enough rest between practice sessions.

Prevention/treatment:

The tingles or aches will go away quickly as you practice more. If you feel it becomes worse or feels like a stinging pain. **Contact your doctor.**

Arm and elbow problems



You may not immediately think of your arms, elbows and shoulders as: particularly at risk when playing the saxophone. Though the number of issues that are common in this area of the body are small. They are almost always, chronic problems, which can really make your saxophone hobby difficult. So best to prevent them from happening!

1: Saxophone elbow (also known as tennis elbow)

Description:

Saxophone or tennis elbow is a common name for a condition caused by overuse (over-stress) of the arm, forearm and hand muscles. It results in chronic elbow pain. Specifically in the areas where the muscles and tendons of the forearm attach to the outside bony area (called the lateral epicondyle) of the elbow. Pain can also be present in the backside of the elbow and upper arm.

In athletes it happens mostly in the dominant arm but in saxophone players it often affects both arms.

Symptoms:

- Slowly increasing pain around the outside of the elbow. Sometimes pain can develop suddenly but this happens less often.
- Pain is worse when shaking hands or squeezing objects
- Pain is made worse by stabilizing or moving the wrist with force. For example when: using tools, opening jars or handling a toothbrush or knife and fork.

Since many conditions can cause pain around the elbow, it's important to consult your doctor so he/she can confirm you have Saxophone Elbow and not something else.

The pain from Saxophone elbow can make it near impossible to play saxophone. Whatever you do, if you feel pain around the elbow while

playing, STOP playing! Or you can cause yourself to need many weeks of physiotherapy in order to heal.

Causes:

Saxophone elbow is caused by one thing and one thing only, improper saxophone technique. Specifically it's caused by holding/lifting the saxophone in a bad way.

When playing the sax it's important to let the weight of the saxophone rest on your shoulders and neck (through the neck chord) and against your belly. The arms are only used in a very minimal way in order to stabilize the saxophone in your hands, but you should not be lifting the sax in any way. Now of-course there are plenty of moments and stage-moves where you might lift the saxophone up in front of you for a moment. These are generally not a problem. So long as the sax remains at rest on your neck and belly the rest of the time.

Unfortunately, some players lift the sax up a bit all the time, especially male players do this, using their shoulders, elbows and wrists. This puts a lot of strain on the muscles and tendons in the elbow and, over time, will cause them to become over-stressed and cause pain and inflammation (swelling, redness, incapacitating pain).

Once the pain is in the elbow. It tends to come back faster and faster and become more intense, until it is present all the time and is so severe you can barely move your arms.

Aggravators:

- 1: Bad posture
- 2: A badly fitting neck-chord
- 3: Long practice times without sufficient breaks to rest the arms.

Prevention & treatment:

Saxophone elbow can be healed with several weeks of complete rest and physiotherapy.

Immediate pain can be reduced by avoiding any activity that causes pain and applying ice packs to the affected area. However it can take up to 5 weeks of complete rest to eliminate the pain. After the pain has subsided you still need to slowly build up activity and stretch the muscles again over several weeks or the pain could come back.

Healing saxophone elbow can take a lot of time. This is why it is very important to STOP playing immediately if you feel, even very mild, pain coming up in your arms or elbows. If the pain is still very mild, just a few days of complete rest may be enough to heal/prevent getting a full-blown saxophone elbow. But push through the pain for half an hour or more (just to finish that one gig) and you might be stuck with a big problem for many weeks or months.

5 to 10 % of people with saxophone elbow do not get better with conservative treatment and need surgery and a long period of rehabilitation to heal the problem.

2: Shoulder pains (Tendinitis)

Description:

Every year, many saxophone players experience problems and pain around the shoulder area and joints. The pain can be accompanied by spasms and it can also cause migraines and increase your chances of developing problems with your neck (read chapter 1).

In addition to a stinging pain, that often radiates out to the arms and neck, the shoulder can seem stiff and it can be painful to lift up the arms. Making it hard to play the saxophone.

Symptoms:

- Pain and swelling in the front of the shoulder and side of the arm
- Pain triggered by raising or lowering the arm
- Clicking sound when raising the arm
- Stiffness
- Pain that causes you to wake from sleep
- Pain when reaching behind the back
- Loss of mobility in the affected shoulder and arm.

Causes:

Like saxophone elbow (previous chapter) shoulder pain is caused by improper technique.

Specifically it's caused by holding/lifting the saxophone when playing, It's important to let the weight of the saxophone rest on your shoulders and neck (through the neck chord) and against your belly.

The arms are only used in a very minimal way in order to stabilize the saxophone in your hands, but you should not be lifting the sax in any way. Now of-course there are plenty of moments and stage-moves where you might lift the saxophone up in front of you for a moment. These are generally not a problem, so long as the sax remains at rest on your neck and belly the rest of the time.

Unfortunately, some players lift the sax up slightly all the time. Especially male players do this often, using their shoulders, elbows and wrists. This puts a lot of strain on the muscles and tendons in the shoulder and over time, can cause them to become over-stressed and cause pain and inflammation (swelling, redness, incapacitating pain).

Once the pain is in the shoulder. It tends to come back faster and faster and more intense, until it is present all the time and is so severe you can barely move your arms.

Aggravators:

- 1: Bad posture
- 2: Long practice times without sufficient breaks to rest the shoulders
- 3: sleeping on the same side every night
- 4: Always carrying your saxophone bag on one shoulder.

Prevention and treatment:

Tendinitis in the shoulder can be healed with several weeks of complete rest and physiotherapy.

Immediate pain can be reduced by avoiding any activity that causes pain and applying ice packs to the affected area. However it can take up to 5 weeks of complete rest to eliminate the pain. After the pain has subsided you still need to slowly build up activity and stretch the muscles again over several weeks or the pain could come back.

Your doctor may also prescribe an injection of steroids in the affected shoulder to reduce the initial inflammation and pain.

Healing can take a lot of time. This is why it is very important to STOP playing immediately if you feel, even very mild, pain coming up in your shoulder(s). If the pain is still very mild, just a few days of complete rest may be enough to heal/prevent getting full-blown tendinitis in the shoulder. But push through the pain for half an hour or more (just to finish that one gig) and you might be stuck with a big problem for many weeks or months.

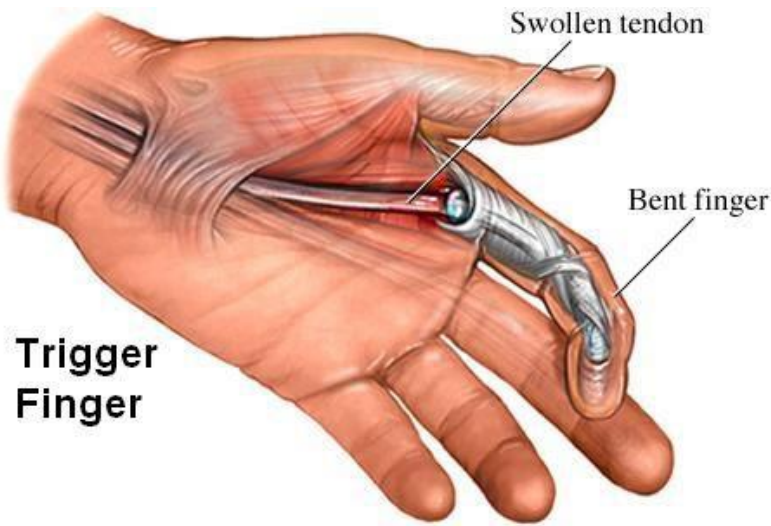
5 to 10 % of people with tendinitis in the shoulder do not get better with conservative treatment and need surgery and a long period of rehabilitation to heal the problem.

Hand issues:



When playing the saxophone we make extensive use of our hands. With proper training the hands of a saxophone player will move as swiftly, subtly and gracefully as a ballerina, but to get there we invest a lot of time and effort. Not surprisingly this is an area of our body we want to be super careful with. So what can go wrong and how do we prevent it?

1: Trigger-finger / snap-finger / saxophone finger



Description:

Fortunately this is a rather rare problem, but it still happens to quite a few of us each year and so merits mention in this eBook. Trigger finger is a disorder characterized by the catching, snapping or locking of the finger in a certain position. It hurts to move the finger from this locked position and when it finally moves, it snaps out of the locked position as if pulling a trigger. Hence the name.

Triggering is usually more pronounced late at night and in the morning, or while gripping an object firmly.

It's not hard to see how regularly playing the saxophone can be a perfect co-factor for triggering trigger-finger.

Causes:

The exact cause of trigger finger is unclear, but it has been speculated that repetitive forceful use of a digit can increase the risk for trigger finger.

Trigger finger of the thumb is proven to happen more often in people who have had surgery for carpal tunnel syndrome.

It seems some people are also genetically more prone to develop trigger finger. As a student of mine wrote me that he had never even heard of the condition, but when he started to play the saxophone, within a few months he developed trigger finger in all his fingers except his thumbs. Though this is in no way conclusive proof. It's possible the particular physical pressure of playing the saxophone is rather perfect for bring it out in those who have a genetic disposition for it.

Aggravators:

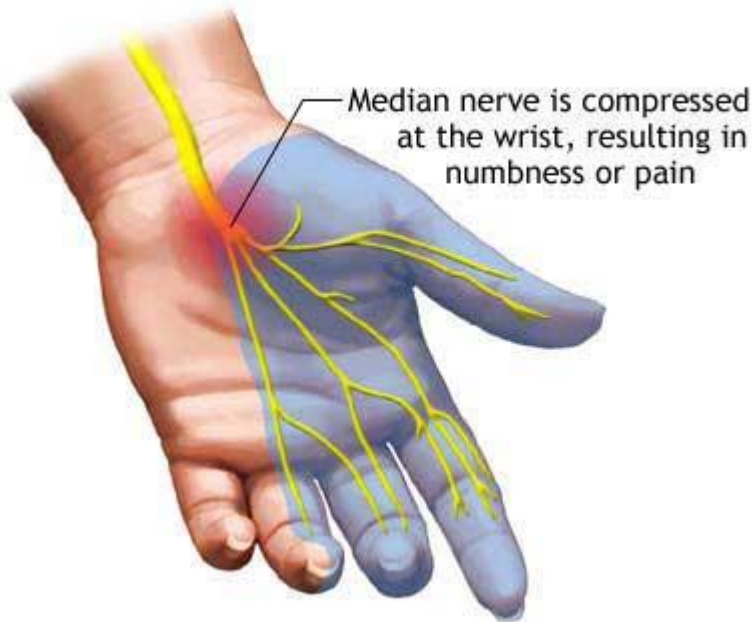
- 1: All activities that put a lot of forceful strain on the fingers
- 2: Not taking ample breaks to rest the fingers when practicing.

Prevention and treatment:

Once contacted there is no natural cure for trigger finger. An injection of the tendon sheath with a corticosteroid is effective over weeks or months in about 60% of patients.

If steroids are not effective a simple surgery under local anesthesia usually solves the problem permanently.

2: Carpel tunnel syndrome



Description:

Internationally there is still much debate on the exact definition and causes of C.T.S. With a wide public debate going on one way or the other it is mostly work related and is caused by, for example, using a mouse to control a computer all day long.

To keep things simple, the best description of C.T.S. is that it causes pain, stiffness and tingling of the hand and fingers which can radiate up the arm to the elbow and shoulder. C.T.S. can make it very hard or even impossible to play the saxophone.

Causes:

The exact causes for C.T.S. are varied and there is much disagreement on how exactly it happens, but doctors agree that the condition is caused by the compressing of the median nerve at the level of the wrist. It is speculated that the condition is provoked by the over-use of repetitive movement and small manipulating activities of the hand. The reason for this assumption is that it is these repetitive activities, which seem to exacerbate the pain the most in people diagnosed with C.T.S.

When playing the saxophone we make a million small repetitive movements with our wrists and fingers, while simultaneously carrying a significant weight on our wrists (the point where the nerve is usually compressed). So saxophone playing seems, once again, a good activity to provoke C.T.S. if one is not careful to get enough rest!

On the other hand, biological factors like genetic predisposition and anthropomorphic features have significantly more causal proof with C.T.S. than occupational and environmental factors such as repetitive hand use and stressful manual work. This suggests that C.T.S. simply might not be preventable for some people.

Symptoms:

- Pain in the wrist and hand (can radiate up into the arm and elbow)
- Stiffness of the hand and wrist
- Tingly feeling in the hand

Aggravators:

- 1: Not giving the hand and fingers ample rest during long practice sessions.
- 2: Studies show that regular alcohol use has measurable adverse effects.

Prevention and treatment:

Once contracted, the best way to heal C.T.S. is extensive physiotherapy.

Injections of steroids, using a splint or surgical procedures are also often used treatments. Treating C.T.S. starts with consulting your doctor. He/she will often start with conservative treatment. If this does not work, gradually more intense measures can be tried.

C.T.S. can affect anyone and accounts for 90% of all nerve compression syndromes.

The best known way to prevent C.T.S. is to give the wrists ample rest throughout the day, and stretch the hand regularly.

2: Pinky pain



Description:

Many beginners experience slightly painful sensations or an unusual sensitivity in the pinkies. This can sometimes last for several weeks, mostly you will feel it directly after playing for an hour or so.

It's actually nothing serious, but because so many starters ask me about it I want to include it here. There is also little danger of it crossing over to other fingers ;)

Causes

Pain in the pinkies, which I have lovingly officially named “saxophone-pinky-itis” is nothing more than a growing-pain. We are very much not used to using the pinky in any forceful way in daily life. Playing the saxophone changes that as the pinkies are very actively used. So for the first few weeks you will likely experience some saxophone-pinky-pain, but it's nothing to worry about.

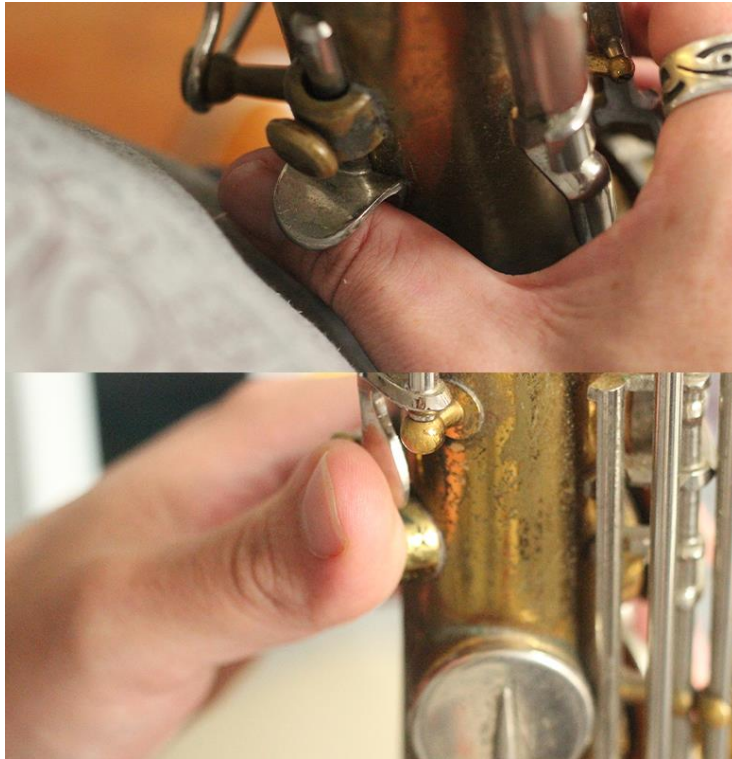
Aggravators:

1: Bad pinky technique.

Prevention and healing:

Simply keep practicing daily and your pinky-itis will subside soon enough.
Make sure you use proper technique

3: Thumb pain:



Description:

Like Pinky-pain (see previous chapter), thumb pain is something most beginning saxophone players experience in the first weeks of picking up the saxophone hobby.

Though it is usually nothing serious and will subside with time and practice. There are some people who develop a more serious problem with the thumb. Namely Tendinitis which is inflammation of a tendon (Pain, swelling, redness, stiffness).

It can make it very painful, hard or even impossible to move your thumb. This can obviously be a serious problem so make sure to read the chapter below on preventing this carefully.

Causes:

Most thumb-pain, caused by playing the sax, is just a growing pain. And given enough time to rest in between sessions, your thumb will increase in strength and the problem will subside in days or weeks. However, if you stress you thumb to much you can develop tendinitis.

Tendinitis is caused by small cracks or irritation of the tendon by repeated trauma/stress.

Aggravators:

1: Not enough rest between practice sessions

Treatment and prevention:

The best way to prevent tendinitis in the thumb is to be very observant of pain in the thumb and take it seriously. The important thing is to respect the line between good “I’m getting stronger” pain and bad “I’m damaging myself” pain. Like in a gym, it all depends on pushing yourself, but not pushing yourself too hard. The fact that it’s difficult for most people to feel when they cross the line, is why we see so many people get injuries in gyms. And it’s also why some saxophone players end up with tendinitis in the thumb.

As a rule, if something hurts, don’t think of it to lightly. When it happens for the first time, stop immediately and observe how long it takes for the pain to go away completely. If it takes long (hours or days) for the pain to

subside completely, you are overstrained and need to take more rest until the pain doesn't come back.

Also if the pain comes faster and faster, this is also an indication that you're on a dangerous sliding slope. Take ample rest until the pain has subsided completely.

Stretching your hand, by pushing it on a table, spreading your fingers and leaning on it a bit, is proven to help the muscles in the hand relax.

5: Loss of motor control and recuperation of the hand after severe accidents

Description:

Every year some saxophone players injure their hands in non-saxophone related accidents like car-crashes or sports related accidents. After a severe accident like that, sometimes people lose some. Or all motor function and feeling in the hands. Of-course this is a very real tragedy for any saxophone player. Several people, who have had something like this happen to them, have asked me if it is possible to regain function in their hand(s) in a situation like that.

In some cases it is possible. You will, through intense physiotherapy, be able to regain most or all function in your hands. But in many cases there is lasting damage and at least a significant permanent loss of control and feeling in the hand.

Causes:

Trauma from accidents damages the nerves that control the hand. Because nerves heal very slowly and cannot really regrow if broken, nerve damage is often permanent. Though, if the nerve is not broken, it can heal with ample time and exercise.

Prevention and treatment:

Your doctor is your main source of help in a situation like this. Through consulting with various experts he/she can give you the best chance of healing, or learning to live with your disability.

There are several “mad instrument scientists” who can modify instruments to enable people with a disability in the hands to still play the saxophone. It usually takes quite a bit of re-learning to do things in a new way, but there is always a chance you can play again through some novel human ingenuity.

Ask your doctor for a local connect on these matters

Metal allergies (Allergic contact dermatitis)



Description:

It's sad but true, each year a few of us become, or discover we are, allergic to the touch of the saxophone. Or more precisely, to contact with certain metals in the saxophone.

If you find you experience an itch or start to develop a rash on your skin in-or-near the places that make direct contact with the sax, you might have a metal allergy.

Symptoms usually manifest within 12 to 48 hours after you're exposed to the specific metal you are allergic to. They can include:

- Itching
- Redness of the skin
- A rash
- Dry patches
- Swelling of the skin, sometimes followed by blisters.

If left untreated your skin can become dark, leathery and cracked. The rash usually stays in the places that were in direct contact with the metal, but in some cases they can spread to other parts of the body. Sweating (warm weather) often makes it worse.

Causes

Usually, the allergic reaction first occurs on the spot where the metal made contact with the skin. Contact dermatitis is considered a "dose dependent" phenomenon. So you may not develop a reaction the first time you come in contact with a metal you are sensitive to. But each exposure increases the cumulative dose. Until an allergic reaction is suddenly triggered.

Once you've developed an allergy, it often stays with you your whole life, but there are ways to ease the symptoms.

The metals that cause the most allergic reactions are:

1: Nickel

Is found in a lot of jewelry, belt buckles, earrings etc.

2: Gold

Is found in a lot of jewelry, belt buckles, earrings gold slager, etc.

3: Cobalt

Found in dental amalgams, porcelains, glass, buckles, and zippers. Also it is found in some foods like apricots and chocolate.

4: Chromate

Found in cement plaster, drywall, yellow and green pigments in paint and tattoos and in multivitamins. Also foods like: black peppers molasses, eggs and spinach are high in chromium.

Aggravators

1: Any prolonged exposure to metals (especially the four above mentioned ones).

Treatment and prevention

Once an allergy develops, the most important thing you can do is avoid contact with objects that can cause a reaction. Always contact your doctor!

For mild symptoms, a hydrocortisone cream and antihistamine pills may help. (These are available at your local drugstore).

For more severe symptoms, you doctor may prescribe a steroid cream or an immunosuppressant drug. If the symptoms are very severe, treatment may also include oral steroids and antihistamine pills.

To minimize your chance of developing an allergy:

1: If you have your ears, or other body parts, pierced or tattooed, have it done with sterile, surgical-grade stainless steel instruments. It's a good idea to avoid piercing guns, as they may contain nickel and can cause bacterial infections.

2: Make sure your jewelry is made of surgical-grade stainless steel or either 14-, 18- or 24-karat yellow gold, pure sterling silver, copper, platinum, and titanium. Polycarbonate plastic is also okay.

3: Buy eyeglass frames that are metal-free, or made instead of titanium or plastic.

4: Buy clothes, including bras and other underthings, with buttons, snaps, rivets, or fasteners that are made of plastic or are plastic-coated or painted metal. If your clothes have metal items, switch to plastic or plastic coated.

5: Wear watchbands made of leather, cloth, or plastic.

6: If a good piece of jewelry that you wear daily -- such as a wedding ring -- causes a reaction, ask a jeweler about having it plated in a less allergic metal, such as platinum.

7: If you are extremely sensitive, you may also need to avoid metal-rich foods such as fish and chocolate.

Health concerns for children playing the saxophone:



Description:

Another concern I receive questions about regularly is: **At what age is it appropriate for children to start playing the saxophone?**

There are several theories flying round the internet. I'd like to take this opportunity to provide some clear guidelines on this so, as a parent, you can make an informed choice.

It is advisable to let kids start playing the instrument not before the age of about 6 years and not before, at least, the adult front teeth have come through completely. At that time it should be safe for them to play a curved soprano or Alto sax without any problems (though smaller kids may still have some difficulty with the size and weight of the instrument).

At the age of +5, the children's milk teeth are usually changing. If a child practices for long periods (1 hour a day or more) the pressure on the milk front teeth, can potentially damage the, still forming, adult teeth underneath. So it's advisable to discourage very long practice sessions until all front teeth have changed fully to adult teeth.

If you feel in anyway unsure of what you should do. Just ask your family doctor if he/she thinks its ok.

With small kids it is advisable to instruct them well in keeping the instrument clean and in preventing most of the above mentioned problems in this eBook.

Teach them good habits to stay healthy while playing the sax.

Other common issues:

Now that we have covered the major problems we arrive at the last category. Which is about several, a little more random, problems that sometimes keep players up at night. So I wanted to make sure to also address these as well.

1: Losing your tonsils and playing the saxophone

Description:

Many youngsters play the saxophone, and many of them worry what will happen to their saxophone playing when they hear they have to have their tonsils removed.

Let me set you at ease right away, after eating a lot of water ice cream for a few days, you can continue on playing the saxophone like nothing happened.

2: Piercings in the tongue and playing the sax

Description:

I've had quite a few students write me, asking if they will still be able to play the saxophone after taking a tongue piercing.

It depends largely on the location of the piercing whether this is possible. If it's placed more in the back of your tongue it should be no problem. If placed more in the front it could become an issue, but in most cases you

can simply take the piercing out when you're playing, Thus also solving the problem.

People with tongue piercings are slightly more at risk of infections. It could also slightly increase the risk of contracting saxophone lung. (Read chapter 11).

Playing the sax while in recovery from major surgery:

Description:

Quite a few older folks have asked me how they should handle, picking up the saxophone again after major surgery, especially heart surgery.

It's very important you consult with your doctor in these cases. In most situations it is best to simply start carefully. Using minimum exertion and slowly building up your practice regime again, being very careful not to push it too hard.

The best advice I can give you is to work closely with your doctor while slowly building up the practice. Constantly making sure you're not hurting your own recovery.

If you stick to that, in most cases you can get back to playing the sax just as before in a fairly short time.

End word

You've completed Healthy and Saxy! So you now have a very good awareness of the various health risk that come with the saxophone hobby. If you use common sense + the tips in this book I'm confident you'll be able to avoid most or all of them. And if you're a teacher or if you have kids that play the sax, I hope it will help you to give them good instructions. So you can feel confident that they too will avoid running into trouble.

I hope you enjoyed reading this eBook and found it to be enlightening.

Of course Hello Saxophone has a nice range of eBooks and video programs to help you master the saxophone step by step. If you'd like to explore my materials further, below is a list of links to my other materials:

www.HelloSaxophone.com – The easy starter's guide to the saxophone

www.HelloSaxophone.com/tonecenterbuilder.html - Tone Center Builder

www.HelloSaxophone.com/FSWP.html - The Full song workshop program

<http://www.hellosaxophone.com/insidethesaxophone.html> - Inside the saxophone

Warm regards

Florian Rooz

P.S. I'd love to get your feedback on Healthy and Saxy. It really helps me improve my books over time, so if you'd like to share your experiences please shoot me an email at: Info@hellosaxophone.com