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### In this issue...

1/6 - AWISH At a Glance +  
AWISH AGM\*

2 - Scleroderma. Newly  
Diagnosed: Taking the First  
Step on Your Journey  
+ \*AWISH AGM Agenda

3 - Dr. Mitch Schulman:  
Managing Back Pain

4 - Spring Calendar of Events  
(Exercise Class Schedule)

5 - AWISH Shared Story:  
The Power Within

6 - Words of Wisdom + Thank  
You to Our Supporters

**Arthritis West Island  
Self Help Association**

640 Lakeshore, #103  
Dorval, QC, H9S 2B6

**514-631-3288**

[arthritis@awishmontreal.org](mailto:arthritis@awishmontreal.org)

[www.awishmontreal.org](http://www.awishmontreal.org)

Reg'd #: 89055 8893 RR0001



## AWISH - AT A GLANCE

We're a non-profit organization that assists those dealing with arthritis and chronic pain in the West Island of Montreal and surrounding areas. Since 1987, AWISH has been committed to serving the community and it is with the generous donations of others that we can provide: information, education and support. Thank you!

[www.awishmontreal.org/get-involved](http://www.awishmontreal.org/get-involved)



Learn more about the  
services AWISH offers  
to the community  
and view our list of  
supporters featured on  
page 6 – join us!

*AWISH members receive discounted rates for exercise classes – see page 4*

## AWISH AGM | JUNE 15<sup>th</sup> 2026 | 4 - 7 pm

**Sarto-Desnoyers Community Centre – Salon B**

1335 Chem. Bord-du-Lac-Lakeshore, Dorval, H9S 2E5

*View agenda  
on page 2*

**\* MUST REGISTER WITH AWISH IN ADVANCE \***

**PUBLIC EVENT | AGM REPORT, Q&A followed by a COLD BUFFET**

**Bilingual PowerPoint Presentation: Arthritis & AWISH - Living the Best Life**

Testimonials and self-help documents available.

Specialized exercise demonstration planned, other details to follow.

Register for the AGM & stay updated by visiting [www.awishmontreal.org/services](http://www.awishmontreal.org/services)

## ARTICLE SNEAK PEEK THE POWER WITHIN

[view page 5](#)

*Chloe Guan - February 2026*

At the age of fourteen, a diagnosis of Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis with Sacroiliitis leaves Chloe facing numerous questions and fears before ultimately finding the courage and motivation to push forward to continue to follow her dreams. Self-advocacy, resilience and perseverance lead the way for Chloe to take on the world and to keep hoping, because good things DO take time.

**MEDICAL PARTNERS**  
of AWISH - Rheumatologists:

Dr. Elizabeth Hazel  
Dr. Mary-Ann Fitzcharles

Dr. Marie Hudson  
Dr. Michael Starr

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH – AWISH PRESENTATIONS & INFORMATION BOOTH

Having a public event or a private gathering? Invite AWISH to be there!

Email [arthritis@awishmontreal.org](mailto:arthritis@awishmontreal.org) and please put Subject as “Community Outreach”

## SCLERODERMA NEWLY DIAGNOSED: TAKING THE FIRST STEP ON YOUR JOURNEY

*Source: Scleroderma news a Bionews community*

*Becoming educated is a good place to start on your journey with scleroderma. Whether you are a patient or a caregiver, knowing as much as possible about the disease will help you be a more active participant in your or your loved one’s healthcare. Learn more below about scleroderma, its causes, its symptoms, and how it’s diagnosed.*

### OVERVIEW

Scleroderma is a chronic disease that affects the skin and connective tissue, the tissue that supports and holds organs together, and is also found in the joints. The hallmark of scleroderma is thick and hardened skin caused by excessive production of collagen, a protein that is the main component of scar tissue. This scar tissue can accumulate in and damage organs.

### TYPES

It is broadly separated into two major groups: localized scleroderma and systemic scleroderma. In localized scleroderma, usually only the skin and/or underlying muscle tissue is affected, whereas in systemic scleroderma, the disease also affects internal organs. Patients can have different symptoms and different combinations of the disease.

### CAUSES

Scleroderma is an autoimmune disease characterized by patches of scar-like thick skin caused by collagen buildup in the area between cells called the stroma. In scleroderma patients, the body keeps producing collagen as if there is a wound that constantly needs to be repaired. It appears to develop spontaneously, and its underlying causes are still unknown.

### SYMPTOMS

Scleroderma symptoms can vary dramatically, depending on which organs are affected and how severely. For some patients, symptoms can be mild; for others, they can be life-threatening. Symptoms also differ depending on if the patient has localized or systemic scleroderma.



### DIAGNOSIS

There is no single test to diagnose scleroderma, and patients may have to undergo several tests to exclude other conditions before a conclusion is reached. Tests also may be carried out as part of the diagnosis to see which organs the disease has affected. Physical exams, biopsy, blood tests, and tests to evaluate organ function may be carried out in the diagnostic process.

[www.sclerodermanews.com](http://www.sclerodermanews.com)

### AWISH AGM AGENDA

June 15 2026, 4-7pm Salon B at Sarto-Desnoyers  
*See page 1 for more information*

1. Call to Order (at 4:30pm)
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Approval of the Minutes of June 15, 2025
4. Treasurer’s Report
5. Appointment of Accountant
6. President’s Report
7. Nominating Committee Report and Election of Board Members
8. Question Period
9. Adjournment (AWISH Special Presentation)

# DR. MITCH SHULMAN: MANAGING BACK PAIN

*Source: Dr. Mitch Shulman, The Suburban - Sept 26, 2024 Updated Oct 30, 2025*

Almost all of us will experience back pain at some point in our lives. There are many reasons but it's a simple fact that there's a lot of strain put on our backs.

The first and key message: if you want a healthy back you need a healthy body.

Bone is a living tissue. It's constantly refurbishing itself based on your activity levels and the supplies of raw materials. To build strong bone and keep it strong as we age we need to provide enough of the right building materials: enough calcium, protein and vitamin D (among other nutrients) to provide the building blocks to keep the bones in your back (the vertebrae) and the discs between them in the best possible shape. Supplementation (especially of Vitamin D) may be necessary, particularly in the winter when the sun isn't strong enough to stimulate our skin to make enough Vitamin D on its own.

Next, we need to stimulate the bone to take care of itself. Sitting all day isn't what healthy bone requires. It needs to be stressed by gravity. Walking, climbing stairs, are good at that. Swimming, biking and similar exercises are great for maintaining a healthy circulation so the blood can get to the bone with what it needs, but effort against resistance is very important. That's why training with weights is often recommended. The weights don't need to be heavy but the effort against resistance encourages the bones to make themselves stronger. However, you have to be careful. Poorly executed weight training (in the same way that lifting improperly), may create back pain by straining the supporting muscles.



The back really counts on the muscles that surround it to support it. That includes the muscles of your belly, which is why developing a “beer” belly can be so damaging to the back. It increases the forward strain on its supporting structures and weakens the muscles. A strong back requires good posture to evenly distribute the forces on it and strong supporting muscles, which means an exercise program that spends time strengthening the muscles of the abdomen and lower back.

In spite of the best intentions, there can still be problems. Mechanical back pain caused by lifting or twisting should be immediate and localized only to the lower back or perhaps move into the buttocks but no further. Warmth, rest, massage (with or without an anti-inflammatory cream), and pain meds (such as acetaminophen (Tylenol, among other trade names) and /or a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicine such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, etc.) or naproxen (Aleve and others)) should resolve the issue within a few days. Physiotherapy is a good idea to review what caused the injury and also to learn how to strengthen the back with exercises and stretching to avoid it happening again.

Warning signs to be on the lookout for: unexplained weight loss; night sweats associated with the pain; pain worse at night or when at rest lying down; pain that radiates all the way down an arm or a leg; pain associated with a change in sensation or a weakness in the use of an arm or a leg; any back pain associated with a sudden change in your ability to control your bladder or bowels.

We call these “red flags” in medicine and they alert the physician to assess the situation carefully to make certain there's no serious underlying health issue. The good news is that most of the time back pain can be resolved with the simple measures mentioned above.

*Dr. Mitch Shulman is an Associate Professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine at McGill Medical School as well as an Attending Physician in the Emergency Department of the McGill University Health Centre. He's also the CJAD AM 800 Medical Consultant.*



**AWISH SOCIAL BRUNCHES** are held every 3rd Sunday of each month. Contact AWISH for more information. We hope you'll join us for a good (pay-your-own) meal & conversations!



# AWISH SEASONAL CALENDAR - SPRING 2026



For more information on programs & activities by  **AWISH** - contact us  
[www.awishmontreal.org](http://www.awishmontreal.org) | 514-631-3288 | [arthritis@awishmontreal.org](mailto:arthritis@awishmontreal.org)

## EXERCISE CLASSES – pre-registration is required

### WHAT ARE THE AWISH EXERCISE CLASSES LIKE?

Led by a certified fitness instructor, in each 90 minute low-intensity exercise class you'll go through a range of motion exercises while standing, sitting and lying down on a mat (or sitting on a chair), followed by a relaxation period.

### DO I NEED TO HAVE ARTHRITIS TO ATTEND A CLASS?

No - our program is open to everyone! Our classes help promote strengthening muscles, protecting your joints, improving balance, relaxation techniques and more. It is designed to meet individual needs and abilities.

### NOT SURE? ASK ABOUT OUR 1 WEEK FREE TRIAL CLASS – GIVE IT A TRY!

Become  
an AWISH  
member  
\$30/year



### DORVAL

Sarto-Desnoyers Community Centre - 1335 Chem. Bord-du-Lac-Lakeshore

#### WEDNESDAY - MORNING

10:30 am – 12:00 pm

April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 + May 6, 13, 20, 27 + June 3

10 weeks - total price: \$90 AWISH member | \$100 non-member

#### WEDNESDAY - AFTERNOON

1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

### DDO

Banquet Hall - DDO Civic Centre - 12001 Blvd de Salaberry

#### WEDNESDAY

11:30 am – 1:00 pm

April 8, 22, 29

May 6, 13, 20

June 3, 10, 17

**\* NOTE: NO  
classes on April 15  
and May 27**

9 weeks - total price: \$81 AWISH member | \$90 non-member

### PIERREFONDS

Gerry-Robertson Community Centre - 9665 Blvd Gouin Ouest

#### TUESDAY

10:30 am – 12:00 pm

April 7, 14, 21, 28

May 5, 12, 19, 26

June 2, 9

#### THURSDAY

10:30 am – 12:00 pm

April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

May 14, 21

June 4, 11

**\* NOTE:  
NO classes on  
May 7 and  
May 28**

9 weeks - total price: \$81 AWISH member | \$90 non-member



Full session payment is required prior to start date. Contact us for cancellation policy, to register & more information.

Visit [www.awishmontreal.org/services](http://www.awishmontreal.org/services) - or scan the QR code above - to view full list of Events & Services

Follow our [Facebook Page](#) to stay up to date on events & services!



## THE POWER WITHIN

*Source: Chloe Guan – February 2026*



The human nature is fascinating. Comprised of body and mind, one must learn to nurture both simultaneously, oftentimes attempting to defy what nature seemingly imposed upon them. Having grown up in a versatile environment and experimenting with various sports, being an athlete was an essential part of me, something that offered me solace, taught me discipline, and challenged me to always strive for more. However, things changed when I was fourteen, for I received a diagnosis that was unfathomable at the time: Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis with Sacroiliitis. Pain was never a stranger to me, or so I thought. Soon, I came to realize that there was indeed a difference between the aching sensation of a good workout and that of doing nothing peculiar. Aside from a noticeable physical difference, the scary part came in the abnormalities: there were no answers to the whys. Why did I suddenly have to deal with this *new disease*? Why did I *suddenly* have to deal with this new disease? Why did *I* suddenly have to deal with this new disease? It's easy to point fingers and blame entities of nature, since closure offers all of us peace. But what should one do when there is no one to blame, when it's one's own body attacking itself? The absence of reason, though confusing and painful, taught me essential life skills that I would never have gained otherwise: resilience, grit, emotional maturity, self-advocacy, and the courage to keep hoping.

Searching for answers and finding none (hence the term idiopathic), I realized that I had no choice but to adapt to my new reality, an extended, once hidden fracture in the life I thought I knew how to navigate.

**"Despite all of the ups and downs of this experience, I can now look back on that time in my life as a milestone, something that reminds me to keep hoping because good things take time."**

Like Paulo Coelho once wrote in his book *The Alchemist*, boats are perhaps safer in the port, but that's not what they're made for. Looking around and picking up the pieces of what I could still count on for sure – my friends, family, and self – I asked myself, "What am I made for?" When I realized that I longed for a life filled with adventure, I readjusted my sails and departed trusting not in the winds that rock my vessel, but rather in my skills as an explorer. I continued playing competitive volleyball for my high school team, contributed to an integrative project in Cambodia, and maintained my community contributions, even enlarging them to other realms such as AWISH. Diving deeper into my month-long voyage to Cambodia, every day of that experience felt like a struggle. Blazing heat, long filmmaking days, and tough physical labour definitely posed a challenge to my physical state, and fitting in with my peers was a fight I knew would be difficult to win. Despite all of the ups and downs of this experience, I can now look back on that time in my life as a milestone, something that reminds me to keep hoping because good things take time.

"Do it anyways" became something I still live by to this day. Though many questioned how I managed to persevere, there is truly no secret: you just have to keep going. That being said, be mindful about your lifestyle, and please know that it's more than okay to take breaks from the world from time to time. You never have to do it all in one day, but you have to keep putting one foot in front of the other. Oftentimes, rheumatic diseases can feel overwhelming and ineffable, but it is by living life authentically that you can challenge social stigma and redefine the essence of the true human nature: courage.

### **SHARE YOUR STORY – AWISH would love to hear from you!**

Visit [www.awishmontreal.org/contact](http://www.awishmontreal.org/contact) or email us at [arthritis@awishmontreal.org](mailto:arthritis@awishmontreal.org)

Share your experience with others - your story may be added to our website.



AWISH VOLUNTEER | DONATE | BECOME A MEMBER

www.awishmontreal.org | 514-631-3288 | arthritis@awishmontreal.org

## WORDS OF WISDOM



*Source: Dolly Parton  
(on turning 80)  
People Magazine -  
November 24 2025 issue*

**"I think there is a lot to be said about age. If you allow yourself to get old, you will. I say, 'I ain't got time to get old!' I ain't got time to dwell on that. That's not what I'm thinking about."**

## AWISH AT A GLANCE – SERVICES OFFERED

- **Exercise Classes:** 4 sessions a year, held in 3 locations: DDO, Dorval, Pierrefonds. See p.4 for Spring schedule
- **Workshops + Tip Sheets**
- **Monthly Social Lunches:** Held monthly at local restaurants, contact AWISH for information on how to join us!
- **Community Presentations & Outreach Program:** Public or private settings, invite AWISH to give a presentation and/or have an information booth at your event!
- **Quarterly Newsletter:** Joint Effort – this is it, published in-house. Enjoy!
- **Public Events:** "Community Information Day – Arthritis Rendez-Vous" Financial support is essential in order for us to continue offering on an annual basis, and free to the public, an all-day event that features local businesses and organizations, guest speakers presenting topics on arthritis (followed by a Q&A with the audience) and more!
- **Young Adults with Arthritis Program:** We are aware that this group of arthritis sufferers need community support through various AWISH programs planned specifically for them - financial support is essential to do this.

## MANY THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS!

It is with their continued support that AWISH is able to better serve the community.

## ADD YOUR LOGO BELOW: HELP US FUND SERVICES - DONATE TO AWISH

The Dr. J. David & Doris Roger Family Fund

Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal

Membres d'AWISH | AWISH Members

DORVAL

LES ANCIENS VOLTIGEURS

LES ANCIENS DE DORVAL QUÉBÉCOIS

PHARMAPRIX Jardins Dorval Gardens

Québec

Pointe Claire

WITT

ACDPN African Canadian Development and Prevention Network

Railroaders in the community CN

Pierrefonds Roxboro

Montréal

Leah Schwartz estate

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**Joint Effort** is a quarterly publication. All articles, at times translated and edited, are presented for your information and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of AWISH. We recommend you consult your doctor if you have any questions about diagnosis or treatment.