

Spring Training!

Hurray! Spring is finally here and you can feel the energy all around you. You have been inside all winter and now you are itching to jump back into ball, golf, or tennis season. Easy does it you weekend warrior! Remember last year? Remember that pulled muscle or that week where you couldn't walk quite right? (Those who take on the downhill running leg in the Snow to Surf relay know exactly what I am talking about!) Putting a little bit of planning into your fitness this spring will save you needless aches, pains, sprains and excessive muscle soreness. Follow the suggestions below and you will not only *look* good on the court but you will *feel* good too!

Always consult your physician prior to beginning a new exercise program.

- 1. Grab your calendar.** First, write down your fitness goals for the upcoming season. Prioritize your goals from most to least important and ask yourself where you would like your fitness level to be for each. Be realistic. One of the most common reasons for failing to meet goals is setting them out of the ballpark of reality! Next, have a look ahead and determine how much time you actually have to get ready for your goal event or date. This will help you to put together your plan...
Plan your next move. Once you know where you are going, you can plan the best route to get there. Building a training program can be a complex or simple as you like and the details will depend on your goals, your current fitness level and the amount of time you are able to set aside for your plan. Be sure to incorporate all the facets of a well-rounded fitness program: Aerobic conditioning ('cardio'), resistance training (using weights & other equipment or body weight), and flexibility (stretching/yoga). Consult a Kinesiologist or Certified Personal Trainer regarding specific exercise selection. Utilizing the expertise of a qualified trainer will ensure that you are choosing the most effective exercises and that you are performing them with correct technique. For a general conditioning program follow these guidelines set by the American Council of Sports Medicine (ACSM):
 - **Cardiovascular Training:** Start with 15-20 minutes of moderate aerobic activity 3 days per week. Each week gradually add minutes onto your workout time until you are able to exercise for 30-45 minutes continuously. As you progress, you may be able to add a 4/5th day of aerobic training to your program. Always begin and end your training session with 5 minutes of very light activity to ensure an adequate warm-up and cool-down.
 - **Resistance Exercises:** Start with 8-10 separate exercises that train the major muscle groups (arms, shoulders, chest, abdomen, back, hips, and legs). Perform a minimum of 1 set of 8-12 repetitions of each exercise for a total of 2-3 days per week. Over time you may want to increase your sets from 1 to 2 as well as gradually increase the amount of resistance you are using. A very gradual progression will

safely ensure that you continue to make improvements in your strength.

- **Flexibility:** Stretching on a regular basis and when done correctly can improve range of motion at a joint. This increased range will help to prevent excessive strain on tissues and decrease your risk of injury associated with muscular imbalances. It is recommended that an active warm-up precede your stretches. Perform stretches for all the major muscle groups a minimum of 3 days per week. Hold each stretch gently for 10-30 seconds and repeat 3-4 times.
2. **Commit to the Core.** By now, you have probably heard the fitness catch phrase 'core-training'. The core is just that-the center of your body. Specifically, the core area is made up of the muscles that stabilize your spine including abdominal, back and pelvic musculature on both superficial and deeper levels. Having a strong core unit will help protect your spine from strain during dynamic activities. The core area is also responsible for the initiation of a variety of movements including twisting, bending, lifting, pushing and pulling. You use your core musculature during all of your recreational pursuits: while skiing in response to turns and moguls, in a tennis match to serve and return the ball, in a soccer match to throw in the ball or fake a pass, during a hike or run in the trails to support your body in response to drops and turns. The list goes on. Incorporate a few core exercises in your resistance training program to ensure you are ready for anything this year!
 3. **Never break the rules.** One of the best ways to avoid injury is to always follow the rules of fitness: warm-up before you exercise, cool-down after, and never skip your stretches no matter how rushed you may think you are!

Good luck, have fun and get movin'!

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