

## **When Your Sports and Exercise is Your Passion.**

You're fired up, your adrenaline is pumping, engines are revved. You can't wait to get out there and perform. You've waited all day, maybe a few days and are replaying in your mind the challenges you will confront and how you will tackle them. Your time to escape the day to day and become your true self, the adventurer, the conquerer, the winner, the leader, the activist or the dreamer has arrived.

When your sport is your passion, motivation is not a problem. Sometimes though, the passion can create complications. Knowing how and when to stop, slow down, change your ways, get educated, hire a pro. or just 'take a break' is essential to survival and ongoing fulfillment from your sports and fitness career.

Your activities are precious and you want to be sure to keep it that way.

You're certainly aware of all the advantages your sports participation provides. It keeps your spirits up, makes you feel and look young, gives you lots of energy, allows you to cheat on your calorie counts, your mind is sharper, helps maintain your figure, you're passionate and optimistic, you feel fulfilled...and this only to start the list of benefits. If your not feeling these benefits you may just want to stop, take a look and see if your missing something in your routine. Sports and fitness adventurers are human too.

Whether your venturing into a new sport, progressing in your same sport, or cross-training here are some problems to consider, hopefully avoid or know what to do, should the situation strike.

Keeping it all in perspective. Let's review some basics:

**PROBLEM:** Too rushed to do a warm up and stretch before physical activity? Remember: studies confirm that cold muscles are prone to injury and it's the times when you're rushed that you are most prone to injury.

**SOLUTION:** Don't give into temptation and jump cold into your sport. Instead jump into jumping jacks, arm swings, leg swings, step out lunges, stationary cycling, running, or walking in place for three to five minutes. Then, a few dynamic stretches (to wake up the muscles and prepare them for effort), while reaching out with effortless breathing. Slow static stretches (which put the muscles to sleep) have been shown to dampen performance efforts, so stretch out and keep it moving. Now your ready to jump in.

**PROBLEM:** Succumbing to the "weekend warrior" syndrome. Compressing all of your physical activity into two days sets you up for trouble and doesn't increase your fitness level. You should try to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day.

**SOLUTION:** If time is a problem HIIT (20 min. cardio) may be your solution. High Intensity Interval Training is really quite simple to do. You pick your favorite cardio activity and build up to a challenge pace by minute 5. Then take your pace up to a winded "sprint" state for as long as tolerable, and bring it back down for however long it takes you to recover enough to go into your next "sprint" state again. These are your intervals, which you eventually build up in numbers. At first you can only do a few intervals and the entire workout will take 8 -12 minutes. So you save time while getting tremendous benefits! You will eventually build up the length, intensity and number of intervals to fill up 20 minutes no more time is needed! Always include gradual warm up (5 minutes) and cool down (3 minutes), add a few stretches if you can at the end.

**Cautionary note:** work within your level as you are more prone to injury because of increased intensity. For example, if you're a beginner use a walk into a jog. Joggers can break into a run for intervals. Runners go into a sprint, sprinters zip into light plyometrics like jump roping or track and field.

It is believed that HIIT helps the body to release HGH (Human Growth Hormone) which is a tremendous fat burning hormone, as well, it has rejuvenating properties for body tissues (including skin, organs and muscle). Less intense cardio programs cause fat loss but also muscle loss, plus there's the time element.

**PROBLEM:** Guessing at how to correctly maintain your physical form or hold a piece of equipment is not smart. Improper form increases the chance of developing "overuse" injuries like tendonitis or stress fractures.

**SOLUTION:** Take lessons from a professional specializing in your specific sport and invest in good equipment. Cross training with a qualified fitness trainer can help you develop enhanced coordination, balance, strength, flexibility, proper alignment and breathing techniques plus teach you body awareness so you don't create bad habits and break the old ones.

**PROBLEM:** Saving time, hassle and money keeping the old shoes and equipment.

**SOLUTION:** Replace them when the treads start to look worn, or when the shoes are no longer as supportive. Visit a qualified orthotist or pedorthist to find if you need orthotics. They will help resolve (foot, ankle, knee, hip, back, shoulder or neck) pain and debilitation provoked by poor foot alignment.

**PROBLEM:** Not wearing the appropriate safety gear.

**SOLUTION:** If you inline skate, use a helmet, knee, wrist, and elbow pads. If you ski, cycle or snowboard, get a helmet and wear sunscreen. Safety gear can save your life, broken bones, soft tissue injuries and keep you away from the risk of cancer.

**PROBLEM:** Ignoring what your body says as you age. Losing flexibility and not modifying activity you did years ago. Some sports put too much stress on the body. The human body is not designed to perform many activities, including traditional sports. Our bodies are very good at repairing, but as we age, that changes and it takes longer to recover.

**SOLUTION:** You need to decrease the repetitive impact particularly to your joints, to continue enjoying your sports with less aches and pains. To modify try to switch from singles tennis to doubles, from running to bicycling, or from advanced ski hills to the more basic slopes. You may not be able to play three times a week because that doesn't give your body time to repair. Meanwhile, work on your flexibility and strength. By conditioning and increasing muscle mass, the body is able to better absorb repetitive impacts. Using lighter weights and 30 repetitions per exercise is safer and still provides improved strength. Lifting weights damages muscle, but when it is rebuilt, it is stronger than before. You may be able to lift two to three times a week and still play sports and allow your body a chance to heal. Some studies show that exercise reduces pain in arthritis sufferers. Warming up, stretching and anti-inflammatory treatments help relieve symptoms but won't slow down the natural progression of arthritis. Nutritional supplements like glucosamine and chondroitin may also reduce symptoms. They are not miracle cures and we do not understand how they work yet. But some users swear that they help.

**PROBLEM:** Being impatient and wanting better results or avoiding boredom.

**SOLUTION:** Use the 10% rule. When changing your activity level, increase it in increments of no more than 10% per week. If you normally walk two miles a day and want to increase your fitness level, don't suddenly try to walk four miles. Slowly build up to reach your goals. Develop a balanced fitness program that incorporates cardiovascular exercise, strength training, and flexibility. In addition to providing a total body workout, a balanced program will keep you from getting bored. If you have been sedentary or even if you are in good physical shape, don't try to take on too much at once. It is best to add no more than one or two activities per workout. Yours truly doubled everything and caught herself another cold...not helpful.

**PROBLEM:** Trying to silence an injury such as tendonitis, arthritis, stress fracture, or low back pain.

**SOLUTION:** See a qualified specialist (these specialists are ordered in seriousness of injury) such as an orthotist or pedorthotist, medical exercise specialist, physical therapist, physiatrist, or orthopaedic surgeon who can guide and advice you along to a speedy recovery to your first love and passion.

Remember you want to keep that sports file filled with great experiences. Your sports and fitness regime should provide a lifetime of adventure, fulfillment and exhilaration, if your passionate and smart!

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