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## Weekend Warriors Beware

By Penny Martin

**SPRING AND SUMMER** are at last pushing their way through winter's strong hold and for many of us, big plans are taking shape. Like hibernating bears we wake from our winter naps but, instead of searching for food, we grab a pencil and pad of paper and begin scribbling down 'To Do' items. The wooden deck you want to build, the house needs a fresh coat of paint, the fence is falling down and in need of repair and your brown and crispy garden needs to be cleaned out, tilled up and replanted. In addition to all this, you also signed up for the company softball team.

### THE WEEKEND WARRIOR SYNDROME

Take care, Weekend Warriors! You know who you are...you probably don't get much (if any) exercise during the week but you jump into strenuous physical activities on the weekend. More times than not these activities turn out to be too much for your body. If you are not careful you may find yourself adding to your 'To Do List.' An appointment with the doctor to have your strained neck examined, have

your knee x-rayed, or even a trip to the emergency room because you think you may have broken a rib sliding into third base during the game.

The human body is made to be active but you need to remember that consistency is important. A consistent program of exercise strengthens the muscles of the body so that when you partake in strenuous activities, whether working or playing, the muscles will remember how to perform accurately. The last thing you want is an unforeseen injury that could land you indoors recuperating.

"These injuries are from your body not being physically prepared. Your body is able to handle strenuous activity if it's conditioned," says Sara Davis, a registered nurse at Medical City of Dallas. Don't remain inactive for long periods of time. There are plenty of activities you can enjoy during the different seasons.

Being a critical care nurse, Ms. Davis has seen patients admitted to the hospital with serious injuries related to falling. "Many times people fall and hit their head and they are unaware that they've broken a blood

vessel. This type of injury can take weeks to show signs and the consequences can be deadly. Anytime you fall and hit your head you should consult your doctor," she advises.

Strains are the most common injuries related to what many people refer to as Weekend Warrior Syndrome. Dr. Gregory Powell, with Associated Orthopedics and Sports Medicine in Frisco states, "These types of injuries are seasonal, no question about it. Ideally, everyone should be doing some type of consistent aerobic activity."

Stretching before any physical activity can help prevent injuries by preparing the parts of the body that you will be using. For instance, before working in the garden or building a deck stretching targeted muscle areas will help prevent a lot of the soreness and other problems people experience. If participating in a weekend cycling event, work the back, leg and abdominal muscles to get them ready for what you will be putting them through.

### WARM UP TIPS

It is always smart before any physical

activity to think and prepare. If you have been inactive, here are some tips that will ease your body into better shape and will help prevent injuries:

- Take the stairs instead of riding the elevator at work.
- Begin early morning or evening walks. Start off slow, just around your neighborhood and then add a block or two with time.
- Buy a Yoga CD for beginners and learn the moves and stretches at home or sign up for a beginner's class. Yoga stretches are great for gardeners who spend hours bending over plants and pulling weeds. Yoga also helps with your balance, which will help in just about every sport you may play, or chore you have to get done.

- Swimming is a great way to get in shape and stay that way without causing a lot of stress to the body. Many neighborhoods now have public pools and offer different schedules for adults to swim and workout. Some facilities have both an indoor and outdoor pool. This can help keep you in shape all year round!
- Protect your skin with SPF sunscreen every time you work or play outdoors. It is possible to get a bad case of sunburn from just one day outside even if the sky is overcast. Do not forget your lips! It is important to wear protective ointment or lotion on this sensitive area.
- Stay hydrated! If you are planning an activity where you will be perspiring a lot, drink plenty of water. Sports drinks are also excellent because they will replace the electrolytes lost while sweating. You



fit small amounts of exercise into your week and then your body will be ready for the activities you plan on weekends. Is there an age group more at risk of seasonal injuries? Both Ms. Davis and Dr. Powell agree it depends on how you look at it. Younger adults tend to be less prepared and think they can do a lot more by themselves, which can easily result in injuries. Older adults are usually less in-shape and their bodies can be thrown by sudden physical activity. Then again, younger groups seem to bounce back faster from strenuous activities and even injuries. Older groups are more understanding of their limitations, they can have their workout routines already in place and they are not prone to overdoing it.

want to prevent de-hydration and heat stroke at all costs.

- Wear the proper equipment for the task at hand. Wearing the right shoes will help absorb stress to your feet while running. If you are building a deck or making repairs to the house wear goggles to protect your eyes. If you are out in the sun for long periods of time wear a hat and a shirt with long sleeves.

Being consistent with your workouts is very important. If you are bored, you will likely quit. Think of ways to make them fun. To stick with any exercise routine you have to enjoy it. Also, remember that exercise does not have to be all consuming. The best advice is to try and

### TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY

Preventative maintenance is the key to good performance. You would not drive your car year-after-year without changing the oil and you would not get all that far without filling the gas tank. Your body works much the same way. Work it too long without maintenance or fueling up, and it will lock up on you.

So jump on that bike, grab up that hammer and hoist that ladder! There are plenty of chores to accomplish and fun to be had by all. If your body is prepared, it will not let you down.

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