



Avoiding Injury: How to Play, but Still Play it *Safe*

According to the Centers for Disease Control, “Regular physical activity is important for good health, and it’s especially important if you’re trying to lose weight or to maintain a healthy weight.” However, many Americans have fallen out of the habit of regular physical activity due to the demands of jobs and families. Sometimes after a hard workweek the weekend warrior in us emerges, and we try to catch up for 5 days of inactivity with more intense or lengthier workouts than our bodies can handle. So where’s the balance?

The first thing any person should do when taking up a new physical activity is **consult a doctor**. The American Heart Association has found that those who exercise sporadically are at a greater risk of exercise-related heart problems than those who work out regularly. So before jump-starting your program, be sure to make an appointment for a check-up. Once you have the okay from your doc, you will also want to pay attention to the following advice!



Mix up the routine. If you’re excited about getting back on the tennis court, enjoy your time there, but also plan some workouts to support the muscles you will need when you are playing. Try alternating tennis dates with weight lifting sessions to strengthen your arms, legs and core. This will help ensure that you have the stamina and power you need to avoid injury on the court.

Warm up for every activity every time. Raising the heart rate and warming up cold muscles will allow your body to make a gentler transition from inactive to active. Try walking at a brisk pace for 10 minutes before your planned activity.

Always pay close attention to your form. When we get tired we tend to allow our form to deteriorate. We have all seen runners at the end of a hard effort who are shuffling their feet, hunching their shoulders, and heaving for breath. It is in those moments of fatigue when we are most likely to suffer injuries due to accidents and, moreover, it’s the time when our bodies are not at their biomechanical best. In the pool, swimming with poor form can lead to overuse injuries such as rotator cuff impingements and shoulder tendonitis. So when you are starting a new routine, focus on strong form not length or distance. If your form falters, it’s time for rest.

Keep track of your effort. Running too much too fast can result in typical overuse injuries such as iliotibial band syndrome, patellar tendonitis, shin splints, and plantar fasciitis. If you decide you want to take up a running routine, be sure to keep a log where you track your weekly miles (or minutes if you are not measuring distance). A good rule is to never increase your weekly total by more than 10%. That means that if you start the first week running 5 miles total (or 50 minutes), the next week your total mileage should go up to only 5.5 miles (or 55 minutes). Larger increases can result in the aches and pains that cause people to swear off running in the first place. But the reality is if you keep track and take it slow, you will begin to see significant strength gains and you will be able to enjoy your running routine injury free.

Exercise during the week. We all have time crunches, and especially during the workweek we sometimes feel too tired to complete necessary tasks like cooking and cleaning, much less to add activity to our days. But we need to accept the fact that if we want to exercise on the weekends without injury, then we need to do some type of physical activity during the week. Try getting up 20 minutes early each day for a yoga or Pilates tape. Climb stairs on your lunch hour. Instead of watching that extra half hour of television before you fall asleep, take a walk around the block. Your weekly workouts don't have to be structured or intense, but they must support your healthy active lifestyle.

Stay hydrated. Water is essential for anyone wishing to increase activity yet stay injury-free. Proper hydration aids in the lubrication of joints, it helps the body stay cool, and it helps transport nutrients. If you will be exercising for fewer than 60 minutes, steer clear of sports drinks, which will only add additional calories. **Forever Natural Spring Water (#265)**, sold in cases of 24 bottles, is a perfect alternative that will keep you moving without weighing you down. A general rule is that you need 10 ounces of water for every 15 minutes of exercise.

Avoid overheating. Especially as we approach the warmer months, we often find ourselves working out when we might

normally be inside. It's imperative that we recognize the symptoms associated with heat-related illness, since people exercising in extreme temperatures are most at risk. Heat exhaustion causes thirst, weakness, nausea and sweating. Heat stroke causes staggering, strong rapid pulse, elevated body temperature, and dry, flushed skin. Heat stroke can be fatal, so if these symptoms occur seek immediate medical attention. Avoid heat illness by exercising early in the day, hydrating properly, and making the workout shorter.



Pamper your inner athlete. After your workout, you deserve a break. **Aloe Heat Lotion (#064)** is a great way to massage tired muscles. It includes deep heating agents for a soothing massage. Massage can increase joint flexibility, decrease scar tissue and soften overused muscles. It's a great way to recover more quickly from even the toughest workouts.

How can we enjoy weekend activities like golf, tennis, running, swimming, or basketball, but avoid the overuse injuries so often associated with them? There's nothing worse than sprained ankles, pulled hamstrings, rotator cuff impingements, or shin splints when our goal is to increase our level of activity, not decrease it. These common-sense rules to avoid sports injuries will keep you moving all seven days of the week, and send you on the road to a healthier lifestyle!



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