

Preparing for Spring Activities

For many of us, maintaining a regular exercise routine throughout the winter months can be more of an ideal than a reality. Winter by nature is more of an inward time, a time for reflection, and for many of us a time to catch up with the things put off during the active summer months. Moving abruptly from physical inactivity to being physically active when spring starts can pose a risk of injury.

Even if we are active with some winter sports such as cross country skiing, snowshoeing, or skating, we tend to use more low body muscle groups vs upper body groups. When it comes time to clear brush, rake the lawn, and pull weeds our upper body may not be prepared for the additional demands and injury can occur.

So what can be done to prepare for a more active pace? Proper regular stretching is the simplest and most effective insurance against injury. Lengthening shortened muscles and muscle groups creates flexibility and greatly reduces the chance of injury. Secondly, strengthening the overstretched muscles and muscle groups keeps them toned and prepared to support you. Together, stretching and strengthening flushes out metabolic waste materials and provides fresh blood and oxygen to nourish and vitalize the muscles. Therapeutic Massage is also a good way to keep flexible and minimize potential for injury.

Professional athletes have utilized Therapeutic Massage for centuries before and after events to help performance, reduce injury, and reduce post-event discomfort. You may not be a professional athlete but the body principles are the same. A tight muscle is a weak muscle prone to injury.

As a massage therapist, the first thing I look for is which areas are shortened and which areas are stretched. My work is to help correct these imbalances and help you identify methods to maintain these corrections.

A good plan to prepare for spring activities starts with gently beginning to become active again. Taking walks that become a little longer and a little brisker, preparing the upper body with light resistance exercises. Practicing deep breathing while exercising helps tone many important muscles of the neck and torso. Begin a stretching program by starting gently and progressively stretching a little more, always within a safe range with out pain. Begin your outdoor activities gradually such as short raking sessions or light garden work. Remember, you might not notice any strain right away. It may not become apparent until the following day. Remember to drink plenty of fresh water. Dehydration is the most commonly overlooked and simplest to correct condition. Also, remember to go easy on yourself. Slow and steady is far better than a long setback from doing too much too soon.

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