

Spring has Sprung

By Katherine M. Byrne, MS, ATC

The snow is finally melting, the sun is shining and the birds are chirping. Everyone wants to get out and enjoy the weather while it lasts. But practice caution before exercising and doing work around the house. Whether you have been active in the winter or not, the body takes time to adjust to exercising outside. Running on a treadmill is much different than running on pavement or rough terrain. Being outside, it is difficult to pace yourself. Measure how far you would like to run or walk and estimate how long it should take you to go that distance. To add variety to your workout, try a new path or try intervals. Start by running for one minute and walking for five minutes. Alternate between running and walking, increasing the running time and decreasing the walking recovery. Eventually, you will be able to run for a full thirty minutes without a rest.

If you choose to bring a pet, remember they have not had the luxury of running on a treadmill in the winter. Ease them in slowly as well. Also, be aware of your surroundings. Try exercising without music. Enjoy the sounds of nature, this way you are more able to get the relaxation benefits of exercise as well as the physical health benefits. It also allows you to concentrate on the muscles that are working, increasing the benefit of your exercise.

To prevent soreness Monday morning after a weekend of work, remember the following:

- Start out slowly with a gentle warm up
- Stretch before and after exercise or working around the house
- Run/walk on a flat surface and increase intensity as needed
- Wear comfortable, supportive shoes
- Dress in layers
- Bend at the knees and lift with your legs
- Try assistive devices when gardening such as a stool or kneeling pad
- Use the appropriate tool for the job
- Ask for help if a task becomes overwhelming

If you do experience mild to moderate soreness following physical activity, practice the simple rule of R.I.C.E. – rest, ice, compression and elevation. Stay off the affected body part as much as possible. Ice is always the best choice with an initial injury. Leave the ice on for twenty minutes. Repeat this every hour all day until you feel the symptoms have subsided. Heat is helpful after the initial 48 hours. Find a compression wrap to keep the swelling to a minimum. Wear it all day, except at night when sleeping. Wrap the affected part securely. And elevate the affected body part above the level of the heart, to help reduce swelling. When in doubt, contact your physician.

The above is intended as general information only. Be sure to contact your physician for advice or your own specific medical problems. Have a question? Write to Questions from the Field, Gananda-Walworth Physical Therapy and Village Fitness, PO Box 162, Macedon, NY 14502, or send e-mail to gwpt@villagefit.com.