

**IS YOUR BODY ADVENTURE-READY?**

*By Jesse Kim, MD, Overlake Hospital Medical Center Bellevue Clinic*

**W**arm summer months—especially of the elusive Northwest variety—inspire us to get outside and get physically active. Outdoor sports and adventures are a great way to enjoy the sun and stay in shape. If you're just starting out or don't work out regularly, it's important to remember to start slowly with any program of physical activity and increase your exercise tolerance over time.

If you're motivated to take on a 5K run, a backpack trip or bike ride to Portland, first consider if you're fit for the sport or activity. Talk to others who have participated in similar events to find out about their experiences, fitness levels and how long it took them to train. If you're not yet ready, don't cancel your plans entirely, but maybe delay them enough so that you give yourself time to prepare.

Plan on three to six months of preparation for major sporting events and consider professional coaching for especially demanding events like mountain climbing. There is a real threat of injuries for those who don't prepare, including sprained and pulled muscles, bone breaks or fractures and even life-threatening emergencies such as a heart attack. The National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases says that injury rates could be reduced by 25 percent if people followed appropriate safety, conditioning and preventive strategies.

As part of your early preparation, make an appointment for a physical exam. If you're under 40, you should get a physical every other year. Those over 40 should get a physical every year. This will identify any issues you need to address before starting your training program, and it's especially important for those who smoke, are overweight or have a family history of heart disease, diabetes or other chronic illness.

Conditioning is the best way to get in shape and improve your abilities and enjoyment of any sport. Conditioning includes resistance or weight training to build muscle

strength, stretching to improve flexibility and range of motion, and aerobic workouts to improve cardiovascular health. Cardio conditioning helps you use oxygen more efficiently and produce more energy so you can work out longer and harder, and with less effort.

Some other tips for healthy conditioning and injury prevention:

- Wear shoes designed for your sport and make sure they fit properly and offer the stability you need.
- Wear any safety gear designed for your sport like helmets, pads and goggles.
- Warm up and cool down at each workout.
- Schedule regular rest days to allow your body recovery time and to avoid overuse injuries.
- Don't play through pain. Listen to your body and treat minor injuries at home with RICE (rest, ice, compression, elevation) for 48 hours. Other injuries should be looked at right away. See your health-care provider if you notice any of the following:
  - Severe pain, swelling or numbness.
  - Pain or swelling from an old injury.
  - An unstable feeling in your joints or bones.
  - An area you can't put weight on.

Following general good health guidelines is even more important when considering an upcoming sporting event or a major change in your physical activity. Consider the following:

- Eat a healthy diet, include low-fat sources of protein like fish, chicken and soy-based products. Take a multivitamin each day, and for women over 50, add a calcium supplement.
- Especially in the Northwest, lack of vitamin D can be a concern as it can cause bone aches and fatigue. A daily supplement that includes 1,000 milligrams of vitamin D is recommended.
- Sleep seven to eight hours each night and retire at the same

time every evening. Avoid food and alcohol two to three hours before bed as these activities induce shallow sleep, not the deep, restorative sleep your body needs.

- Remember to drink plenty of water to stay hydrated, including before and after workouts and every 20 minutes throughout.
- Aim for daily exercise, but remember to increase slowly by working up to 30 to 60 minutes of exercise most days.

A healthy lifestyle along with good conditioning throughout the year can help anyone become better prepared for the sporting events and activities that often occur during summer. Improved strength and flexibility as well as safety strategies will help enhance your performance and your enjoyment, no matter what sport or adventure you choose.

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