

## Spring into FITNESS

As warm weather approaches and days get longer, many people turn their attention to outdoor activities and summer sports. It's crucial that you condition your body, especially if you've been hibernating, to prevent injury and maximize performance. **Spring into Fitness and take full advantage of all your warm weather adventures.** Whether you are a regular exerciser or new to fitness, it is important to begin to prepare for these activities now, as in today, by improving in these four key elements of fitness:

### FORTIFY THE FORT: Strengthen Your Core

Regardless of the type of activity, having strong core muscles (abdomen, back, gluteus and scapular muscles) is important. Strong core muscles give you a solid foundation for safe and more efficient movement. Whether you are gardening, mowing the lawn, swinging a bat, kicking a ball, or hitting a golf ball, a strong core will not only improve fitness, it will help you prevent injuries and enhance your performance. Here are some quick tips to add to your fitness routine:

- ▶ Include core-conditioning exercises such as: planks, spinal bridge and push ups, into your regular fitness routine, no less than three days/week.
- ▶ Quick & easy equipment: stability balls, bands, sliding/balance discs and weights can help challenge your core.
- ▶ Fun Stress-Free Activities: Yoga and Pilates are very effective in strengthening your core while having fun. You can also swap out a day of your usual cardio for a ride on the **ELLIPTIGO**, a great cardiovascular activity that demands a strong core.



### ADD SPRING TO YOUR STEP: Flexibility and Recovery

If you have not been working to actively maintain your flexibility, you will notice that as the years go by your muscles and joints become more stiff and less flexible. It is imperative that you include stretching exercises in your fitness and daily routine. Here are some guidelines:

- ▶ Begin slowly by adding two stretches per body part / per day into your workout routine.
- ▶ Pay special attention to the muscle groups and joints that seem to need it. Listen to your body, it knows what it needs!
- ▶ Incorporate dynamic movements that mimic the fitness activity to prepare muscles to perform their best and prevent injuries.
- ▶ Be sure to practice recovery strategies such as static stretching and using a foam roller on target muscles following your fitness routine.
- ▶ Some examples of quick flexibility exercises: low back extension press ups, shoulder circles, neck stretches, quadriceps and hamstring stretches and side bends.
- ▶ Check out **MELT** as a self treatment technique to keep your connective tissue hydrated and your body in balance.
- ▶ Try **dōTERRA** Deep Blue oil, a pure essential oil that helps ease sore muscles and enhance recovery.



## TAKE HEART: Cardiovascular Conditioning

Did you maintain aerobic activity during the winter? Did you maintain normal body weight? If not, now is the time to start making adjustments for the months ahead. Conditioning your body and heart is essential if you want to create a lifestyle out of fitness! The level of cardiovascular activity you will be doing outside will dictate how much aerobic training you need to do in the preparation phase. Here are some guidelines you might want to take into consideration as you **Spring into Fitness**:

- ▶ Your choice activity matters. Walking your dog three to four miles per day will require some cardiovascular conditioning, but not nearly as much as if you were planning on playing in a summer soccer or softball league.
- ▶ If you like to walk outside, you can condition your body to longer durations by gradually increasing the amount of time you walk while incorporating speed and stride length variations in your workout.
- ▶ Try using a heart rate monitor and work in your target zone to maximize fat burning and cardiovascular benefits.
- ▶ If you plan on playing a summer sport, try to include more vigorous cardiovascular workouts at least three days per week, or incorporate interval training as a means of increasing your body's ability to adapt to greater demands.



## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT: Agility & Sport-Specific Skills

One of the best ways to get in shape for a certain activity or sport is to do that activity or sport. Practice the skills you will need with exercises that mimic that activity.

- ▶ For example, yard work requires a lot of spinal rotation, bending, kneeling and lifting.
- ▶ Soccer requires quick bursts of activity with start and stop moves, balance, coordination and agility.
- ▶ Engaging in agility drills, hand-eye coordination and balance exercise is perfect for any activity. No matter what your age or level of activity, agility training can be started at any time.
- ▶ At Back 2 Normal our Performance Coaches can help determine what is best for you and are highly qualified to assist with the designing the best training program to meet your needs.
- ▶ Check out Back 2 Normal's injury risk assessment to help identify how your movements may be affecting your athletic performance or risk for injury.



Whether you are trying to recover from an injury, increase athletic performance or just prevent injuries from taking you away from your favorite activities, Back 2 Normal has many experts, resources and services for all levels.

Come check us out at [www.back2normalpt.com](http://www.back2normalpt.com) and let us accelerate your Spring into Fitness.

*Special thanks to Christie Bruner, Back 2 Normal Performance Coach and Risha Roa, Back 2 Normal Physical Therapy Intern for their contributions to this month's health topic.*