

Winterize

Your Body Now

By Dan Sullivan



Dr. Todd Sullivan, of Springfield, VA., can be certain that winter has arrived when he starts seeing a greater number of patients with lower back strains. “People tend to think of raking leaves and snow shoveling as nothing more than a tedious chore, but they really are aerobic workouts that can potentially cause injury if you’re not in shape,” says Sullivan.

“Preparation for an outdoor activity, including conditioning the areas of the body that are most vulnerable, can help avoid injury and costly health care bills,” advises the American Chiropractic Association on their website.

DON'T WAIT

A proper conditioning program should be initiated several months in advance. “This will allow [the] body to adapt before the snow flies,” says

Sullivan, who has worked with National Hockey League and National Football League athletes. He stresses that this is particularly important for those residing in the northern states with unpredictable snow falls.

Dr. Craig Buhler, of Kaysville, Utah, agrees. “The level of activity determines when a person should begin their conditioning program,” he says.

He suggests starting the program between six and 12 weeks prior to the season, depending upon the individual’s level of experience.

VARY THE ROUTINE

A well-rounded winter conditioning program should include strength, endurance and flexibility training. “Strength training should include a variety of exercises that work both the upper and lower body and should also include exercises that train the stomach and lower back,” says Sullivan.

Endurance training ensures that muscles do not fatigue too quickly, and flexibility helps prevent strains. Flexibility may also be included as part of a comprehensive warm-up.

Avoid the temptation to jump right into an activity, even if it is just shoveling the driveway. “Simply put, warming up is essential,” says Derek Para, Olympic speed skating gold and silver medalist, on the ACA website. Para even suggests shortening a workout to complete a thorough warm-up. A

warm-up should take between 15 and 20 minutes and should be broken down between light aerobic work and some movement specific exercises like squats for those going skiing or lunges for ice skaters, suggests the ACA website.

THE CHIROPRACTIC LINK

Chiropractic care can be an essential component to a conditioning program and, along with exercise and proper nutrition, can help maintain an active lifestyle.

“Chiropractic care can help prevent injury by first returning motion to an abnormally locked spinal joint, and then keeping the joint and surrounding musculature loose and moving,” says Sullivan.

“Through precise application of chiropractic procedures injuries can be prevented, performance enhanced and recovery time improved,” says Buhler who has worked with a number of Olympic athletes competing in winter

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games and was the Utah Jazz team chiropractor for 24 years.

Experts stress the importance of consulting your chiropractor before starting a new exercise program. It is also essential to start slowly and to have professional guidance, if possible.

When exercising outdoors during the winter months make sure to warm-up indoors, layer clothing, rest regularly, and stay hydrated. Any activity should be terminated at the onset of chest pain, shortness of breath or extreme fatigue.