

## ***Pre-Season Training is for Everybody***

*by Dr. W. E. Kelsick B.Sc., DC., FCCSS(C), FCCRS(C)*

When summer arrives it brings out the energy reserves in all of us. You want to go hiking, camping, to the beach. Most people want the beach look – fit, at the right weight, comfortable in a bathing suit. The ‘bar’ look – pot bellied and overweight – is not easy as easy to get rid of as many think. It takes discipline and willingness to accept some responsibility. The cheapest, oldest and most effective to be “fit” is through exercise, and if you are fit then you can enjoy any type of activity you want.

Professional athletes begin their pre-season training programs several months before the actual season, or even practice season, begins. It is important to them because they want to be, and must be, prepared psychologically and physically to participate with maximum efficiency. In my opinion it should be no different for non-professional or amateur athletes. Pre-season preparation has many benefits:

1. It helps decrease the incidence of overuse injuries, hence decrease frustration;
2. It prepares you mentally to enjoy whatever activity you participate in;
3. Your physiological system, heart, lungs and muscles will be prepared to undertake the workload you intend to place on them.

Overall you will be ready for fun. Most people, however, from my experience treating many athletes over the years, are not prepared and, even worse, do not get or acknowledge the proper advice. The likelihood that an exercise program for a previously sedentary adult will be enjoyable and effective will be greater with specific instructions provided by an informed physician (i.e. an exercise prescription). If properly prescribed, the new exercise experience will (1) be enjoyable; (2) have a high likelihood of compliance and continued participation; (3) provide good conditioning and (4) avoid undue risk of sport injuries including cardiovascular accidents.

In addition to the exercise programs, other fitness enhancing recommendations can be made concerning body fatness, weight control, prudent nutrition, avoidance of smoking and moderation in alcohol use. However, before designing an exercise prescription, the physician will need some pertinent information:

1. A personal and family history. This will help rule out congenital abnormalities in the musculoskeletal system, or cardiovascular disease.
2. Physical examination to confirm any positive findings in medical history.
3. Blood testing profile or electrocardiogram where indicated.

Pre-season evaluation, I believe, is a very important component before any physical activity for all ages. In the long run it helps prevent a lot of problems and may even help individuals choose the right sporting activity rather than limiting their potential because of lack of knowledge.

Armed with knowledge of both the medical status and the conditioning level of an individual, specific recommendations can be made regarding an exercise program. In making that prescription for my client I consider the following:

1. The mode of exercise. The exercise should be enjoyable or compliance will be poor. Several alternatives are suggested and those most suitable for the lifestyle and environment of the individual. For maximum benefit, I suggest the exercise, which involves large muscle masses, provide continuous rhythmic movement and be aerobic in nature (i.e. oxygen using). Such as walking or hiking.
2. Frequency of exercise – There are no hard fast rules. Four times a week with rest days in between workouts, particularly early in the program is recommended. This gives the body time to recover and reduce overuse injuries.
3. Intensity of exercise – This is critical especially for an individual motivated to obtain a prompt and immediate response. The intensity can be monitored by calculating ones pulse rate, from which heart rate could be determined using charts or certain formulas. From maximum heart rate, maximum and minimum training heart rate can be calculated. Training heart rates 60 to 90% of maximum heart rate are believed to provide maximum conditioning.

4. The duration of exercise – The condition level of the individual at the start of the program will determine the duration of the exercise period. Approximately 15 to 20 minutes of “continuous” exercise may be necessary for measurable results. Most individuals will notice a training effect in two to three weeks but it’s best to anticipate measurable results in six to eight weeks of good compliance. Discipline, my friend!

Last, but not least, in order to avoid injuries:

1. Warm up before exercise. The efficiency of muscle function is dependent upon temperature, strength and flexibility.
2. Seek pre-season evaluation.
3. Seek proper advice about exercise from a professional with an interest in sports. Be aware that diagnosis of an injury is most important.
4. Chiropractors are trained to help deal with your concerns about sports and training programs and treatment.