

## **EXERCISE – “But it’s getting cold outside”!**

Yes it is – before we know it, not only will the kids and grandkids be commenting about the temperature outside, but so will we. The nice thing about Fall in the Maritimes is that the weather is generally pretty good – well – except there was that one September that Hurricane Juan decided to visit us. There is nothing more enjoyable than taking a walk through the park, or along a wooded trail – the leaves are beautiful and there is a ‘crispness’ in the air. But best of all there are no mosquitoes or black flies!

Golf season is winding down – but let’s face it – it is a bit difficult to find those errant balls underneath the leaves. As they say ‘been there, done that’. Frustrating, isn’t it?

If you are a jogger or a runner, the cool weather is certainly more comfortable but with the cooler air remember to breathe properly – breathe in through your nose in order to warm the air a little bit before it enters your lungs.

Notice how I have been ‘talking’ about activities that involve walking (assuming you do not ride a golf cart) and running. These are good activities which provide excellent exercise for our leg and hip muscles, and most importantly our heart and lungs. But as the season changes from Fall to Winter, many people prefer to change their activity to a warmer venue. While wintering in Florida or the Caribbean would be a nice option (sun, beaches, warm air), it is not possible for everyone. So – what to do?

### **What options do I have?**

Good question – and there are a lot of things to choose from. Obviously it goes without saying that if you have been inactive or sedentary for quite some time, check with your health care professional as to what you should consider for a fitness program or exercise activity. Depending upon your situation, an EKG to check your heart function, and blood work, might not be a bad idea – as they say ‘better to be safe rather than sorry’!

- **Mall Walking** – A number of malls have walking clubs. Check with your local mall to find out the details. Be sure to wear comfortable walking shoes or sneakers. Mall floors are notoriously hard (tile or concrete) and can put extra strain on your lower back, hips and knees.

Hint: If you are having problems with your feet, ankles, knees or hips, check with your health care professional as to whether orthotics (which are customized arch supports) may be helpful.

- **Pool Exercises or Swimming** – Check with your local pool. Many have established times for adult swimming or just for doing lengths. If it has been a while since you have been swimming it might be a good idea to arrange for some stroke improvement sessions with one of the swim instructors.

Aqua exercise is becoming very popular as this helps to reduce the strain on your hips, knees and lower back. There are usually a couple of options available at pools. One would be in shallow water (and sometimes these pools are heated) or deep water (wearing a water belt). If you don’t swim, talk to the instructor about the deep water classes. I have some patients who could not ‘swim a stroke’ but enjoy the deep water classes and feel quite safe with the water belt. The water belts make it easy to stay afloat and there is no impact on your leg joints (especially if you have had hip or knee replacements). There are a lot of arm movements with water aerobics so if you have a shoulder problem be cautious – talk to your health care professional or the aquatic instructor for alternative exercises.

- **Exercise Classes** – There are a wide variety of options here – elderobics, aerobic classes, step classes, spinning classes (on stationary bikes), and stretch and tone classes just to name a few. If you haven't done these classes in the past, talk to the head instructor and observe a few of the exercise sessions. Better to start slow and move up rather than 'jumping in' to a class that is too strenuous. This could cause you to 'pull' a muscle or ligament.

Hint: If you sprain a ligament or strain a muscle, use ice – not heat. Applying ice every couple of hours for 15-20 minutes is best. Gel packs (like we use in this clinic) are great – they are soft enough to conform to your body or wrap around a joint. You can also use a bag of frozen peas or corn, or crushed ice. You can also make an ice pack using a hot water bottle with a screw cap. Mix a 50/50 mixture of water and anti-freeze (or windshield washer fluid). Putting the hot water bottle in the freezer will keep it cold but also 'mushy'.

Generally buckwheat packs or Magic Bags do not get cold enough, or stay cold long enough to be of any significant benefit (at least based on my clinical experience over the years).

If you have an injury that does not ease with ice and rest over a 24-48 hour period, you should consult with your chiropractor. Chiropractors deal with strains and sprains every day.

- **Resistance Training** – This is a fancy term for using weights, machines or even tubing exercises. Adding physical stress to the body not only tones our muscles but also helps to maintain our bone density. By the way, check with your health care professional as to what type of resistance training might be best for your situation; whether at home or at a local fitness facility or gym.

November is National Osteoporosis Month. Learn more about osteoporosis by checking the articles section of the clinic website ([www.halifaxchiropractic.ca](http://www.halifaxchiropractic.ca)) or by visiting the website of the Osteoporosis Society of Canada ([www.osteoporosis.ca](http://www.osteoporosis.ca)).

### **So there are a lot of options –**

Perhaps a few more than you may have thought of. So start checking things out now so you are ready when the snow flies. You can look at it in a different way – starting now gives you a 'jump' on your New Year's resolutions. So it's time to get active – do it for your health and well being – not to mention that you want to say active for many years to come. Remember golf season is only a few months away (unless you are opting for 'down South').