



## **Physiotherapy Advice for New Year Fitness Fanatics**

Every year, gyms and health clubs can see up to a 30 percent increase in business as Canadians' decide to lose that festive flab – *fast!* It's not uncommon for an individual to gain 5-7lbs over the holiday season. That's a shocking weight gain for many people, and the **Canadian Physiotherapy Association** recommends that Canadians' pace themselves when tackling the battle of the bulge.

Knowing how hard to exercise is a concern for new and experienced exercisers alike. While exercise is certainly preferable to the couch-bound lifestyle, people who do too much, too soon, run the risk of injury. Enthusiasts are in a big hurry to get trim and they don't always take the time to make sure they are exercising properly.

Fitness is a journey and not a destination, say members of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association. Working out and expecting to look better than last year in two or three weeks is unrealistic, and can lead to overtraining, burnout, and/or injury. The key is to match the exercise program to your current fitness level and gradually increase the program length and difficulty. Results will come with time and consistent effort.

### **The Canadian Physiotherapy Association recommends the following fitness tips to reduce the risk of injury in The New Year:**

- Individuals who know or think they have pre-existing medical conditions should consult a health care provider before beginning an exercise program;
- Start slowly if you've been sedentary or if you are trying something new. Doing too much too soon can increase your risk of injury;
- Be realistic when setting your goals;
- Exercise does not have to be done at the gym. It can be a "lifestyle" activity such as going for a brisk walk or hike, gardening, or using the stairs;
- Choose an exercise activity that you enjoy. Avoid obsessing over which exercise burns the most calories. The one you like doing is the one you'll stick with;
- Your fitness program is a gradual process, not a crash course. A minimum of 30 – 60 minutes of daily activity interspersed throughout the day, will achieve and maintain mobility and develop a healthier physique;
- When you are ready for a total fitness program it should include aerobic conditioning, muscle strengthening, and flexibility training on most days of the week;
- Warming up before exercising and cooling down afterward can help to prevent injury, especially as your exercise program becomes more vigorous;
- If you are overweight, consider beginning with low-impact activities such as swimming, cycling, or walking. These activities put less strain on joints;
- If you are in an exercise program and not losing weight, don't get discouraged. There are other health-related benefits associated with physical activity even when weight loss does not occur;
- Keep a log to track your progress. This can help you to stay motivated and highlight areas that need more work;

- If you are fatigued, lower your intensity regardless of whether or not you are fit. Listen to your body – it will tell you if you are working too hard.

Because of their knowledge of aerobic conditioning, body mechanics, muscles, joints and preexisting conditions, physiotherapists are able to develop personalized programs that promote health and physical fitness. A monitored program may begin with non-weight-bearing exercise, such as swimming or cycling, to minimize the impact on joints. It will also include stretching to increase flexibility, and education about injury prevention.

The Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) supports the promotion of an active lifestyle and a fitter, more active population. Investing in the health of Canadians will pay dividends in the future. Physiotherapy's unique contribution to health care stems from its advanced understanding of how the body moves, what keeps it from moving well and how best to restore mobility. CPA is the voluntary organization representing 10,000 members and students across the country. CPA's mission is to provide leadership and direction to the physiotherapy profession, foster excellence in practice, education and research and promote high standards of health in Canada.

Excel Physical Therapy, Westhills Professional Plaza, # 3 568 South Railway St  
SE, Medicine Hat, AB, T1A 2V6

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