

February 2008

## Keeping Fit in Winter Weather



**T**he days are shorter, the weather is colder and your exercise routine is slowly starting to suffer. But bad weather does *not* have to mean bad fitness. The winter is a great time to get creative with your workouts, trying new activities and finding alternative ways to incorporate movement into your day. Consider the following cold-weather exercise suggestions:

**On the (snowy) road**—When traveling, especially during winter months, a jump rope can be your best friend. Easy to pack and simple to use, jump ropes can be used in your hotel room. Also, take advantage of free hotel gym facilities—they are a great opportunity to try new machines. Stuck at the airport? Walk up and down the terminal while you wait.

**“Window shop” till you drop**—Mall walking is a great winter exercise option. Find a friend and trek through your local mall, but make sure to avoid temptations such as sweet stands and fast food vendors.

**Hidden workouts**—Cleaning the house, taking the stairs rather than the elevator, or keeping a pair of resistance bands at your desk can be ways to sneak exercise into your day.

**Off-season gym deals**—Many health clubs offer discounts in the winter when membership drops off. Indoor gyms are climate controlled, offer fun and supportive classes and other amenities, such as hot tubs or saunas, to lessen your winter chill!

**Home sweet home**—For those who really don’t want to leave the house, exercise videos are a cheap alternative. Try a few to see which video works best for you. You may invest in a treadmill, elliptical machine or stationary bike. Or, try cost-free strengthening activities such as push-ups, sit-ups and heel raises on stairs.

**Have fun**—Winter sports such as sledding, ice skating, skiing and even building snowmen can be great exercise. Just dress appropriately (in layers), wear sunscreen (UV rays reflected off the snow are especially strong) and stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water. When participating in more extreme winter sports, such as skiing or snowboarding, stick to your skill level to stay safe while having fun.

Remember, before starting any exercise regimen, it is important to talk to us to create a winter workout that is right for you!

February 2008

## Skiing and Thumb Injury



**S**kiing falls can often cause injury to the inner ligament of your thumb, caused by the force of the pole against this area of the hand during a fall. This area, a band of fibrous tissue connecting the bones at the bottom of the thumb, is known as the ulnar collateral ligament.

This injury is essentially the same as what clinicians have traditionally called **gamekeeper's thumb**. The actual injury is a sprain of the ulnar collateral ligament (tearing of ligament). So whether it's called **skier's** or **gamekeeper's thumb**, we are referring to the same injured structure.

**Skier's thumb** is an acute, or one-time, injury of the ulnar collateral ligament that occurs when you fall during skiing, and your hand remains caught in the ski pole. The fall in this instance can cause stress on the ligament, resulting in the "sprain," while **gamekeeper's thumb** actually refers to a pattern of injury over time that causes a loosening of the ulnar collateral ligament. The term "gamekeeper's thumb" comes from Scottish gamekeepers who would break the neck of wounded rabbits by holding them between the ground and their thumb and index finger. Over time, the inner ligament of the gamekeeper's thumb would become sprained, resulting in injury.

Treatment options for both skier's thumb and gamekeeper's thumb are fairly similar. Typically a physician will evaluate the severity of the sprain and frequently will initiate a treatment program with immobilization. While immobilized in a cast or splint, you are allowed to stay active but are not allowed to apply stress to the healing ligament. This cast or splint is maintained for four to six weeks, at which time we begin a progressive program of motion and strengthening to allow your complete recovery. If the injury is more severe or if there is a complete tear of the ligament, surgery may also be considered. Either way, it is best to return to normal use of the area only after completing **gentle motion exercises** for a while to rebuild the strength of the ligament. If you have been diagnosed with skier's thumb or gamekeeper's thumb, talk to us about treatment and exercise options.

February 2008

## What You Should Know About Arthroscopy



**A**rthroscopy is a procedure used to investigate a multitude of joint-related symptoms by actually looking inside the joints. Similar to a telescope with a light source, the light aspect is necessary to “light up” the joints and to magnify the structures contained within the joint. Arthroscopy is typically performed under local or general anesthesia and sometimes under spinal or epidural anesthetic. Some of the common symptoms arthroscopes examine are swelling, pain and joint instability.

Common misconceptions about arthroscopy are that it is a benign procedure and that any condition requiring this type of procedure is not a serious one. Arthroscopy can show deterioration and damage to cartilage, ligaments and bone, as well as highlighting signs of arthritis. A surgeon

may create a small incision in the skin and then use fine instruments that pass through the joint to biopsy or manipulate areas inside the joint. Your procedure could involve repair of torn ligaments, removal of damaged cartilage, and identification and removal of broken bone pieces.

Arthroscopic procedures are commonly performed on the knee joint and shoulder, but other areas requiring this type of procedure include the ankle, elbow, wrist or hip.

### Rehabilitation

After an arthroscopic procedure, the goal of your rehabilitation program will be to relieve pain and support healing, restore function and encourage independent movement. Your program may include

- **Exercises to promote strength, coordination, flexibility and mobility;**
- **Massages; and**
- **Heat, cold or electrical stimulation.**

Ultimately, your rehabilitation following arthroscopy will affect the final outcome. We can create a comprehensive physical therapy regimen to enhance the end result, allowing the maximum benefit from your arthroscopy.

February 2008

## I Want to Hit the Golf Ball Farther: Golf Tips for the Off-season



**N**ow that the golf off-season has arrived, it is the best possible time to improve your game. That may sound counterintuitive, but consider this—core and muscle strength, flexibility and endurance are the keys to a more effective and consistent golf swing, and what better time to improve these aspects of your personal fitness than when you are unable to hit the course?

Think back on this past season, and reflect on how your body served your golfing needs. Did you tire easily, or did certain muscle groups feel tight after a few holes, forcing you to adjust your swing to compensate for pain or stiffness? Concentrating on core strength and golf-specific muscle patterns is essential to off-season training,

but overall fitness is very important, as well. Building the endurance to stay flexible, strong and balanced through 18 holes is a big part of improving your golf game. To get you started, we've included two simple exercises that work the rotator cuff, lower body and hips, improving strength and flexibility in these golf-specific muscle groups:

**1. Arm circles:** Raising your arms out to your sides, make small circles with your hands, keeping your hands loose and light. Gradually increase the size of your circles, eventually using your entire arm. Don't go too fast; keep the movement fluid and steady. After about 15 seconds, switch the direction of your circles and repeat the same routine. Perform two sets of 15 seconds each for each direction. Over time, you may add light weights to your hands to make this more demanding—*BUT* keep the weights relatively light!

**2. Partial squats:** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart; hold your golf club in front of you using both hands. Slowly lower your body by bending at your knees, *not* at your hips. Raise back up, keeping your upper body very erect, concentrating on your posture throughout. Repeat 15 times.

There are a number of exercises that you can do in the warmth and comfort of your own home while the weather prevents golfing. We will gladly evaluate your specific needs and design a training program.

February 2008

## New Theories About Brain Concussions



**E**very year, many people sustain a concussion—an injury to the brain that results from a mild or severe blow to the head. In most cases, injuries sustained from a concussion will resolve sometime between a few minutes or a few weeks, with no permanent damage. However, researchers are now discovering that repeated concussions to the head, without adequate rest or recovery, can lead to long-term complications.

Concussions can result from falls; car, bicycle or roller skating accidents; or being struck in the head. After a concussion, some people lose consciousness while others appear dazed and confused or show no symptoms at all.

Symptoms of a concussion can be both complex and subtle, with some symptoms appearing immediately while others, days or even weeks later. Friends and family members should watch for the following in anyone who has suffered a blow to the head:

- **Headaches that get worse or won't go away;**
- **Feeling dazed or lightheaded;**
- **Blurred vision;**
- **Excessive drowsiness or difficulty waking the person;**
- **Speech, language or memory problems;**
- **Person becomes easily confused, agitated or has trouble concentrating;**
- **Vomiting; and**
- **Seizures.**

A person with a suspected concussion should be taken to an emergency room or see a doctor immediately. Although most people recover without complications, older adults should be watched carefully as they have a higher risk for complications, including blood clots that can lead to strokes.

Recovery will depend on the severity of the injury, your general health, your age and what part of the brain was injured. Rest and follow your doctor's instructions. Even after you have healed, protect yourself from additional concussions that, like those experienced by boxers or football players, can create problems later in life.