

January 2010

## Resuming Exercise After Being Bitten by the Flu Bug



**F**lu season is in full swing, and along with the regular flu, the new H1N1 virus is infecting thousands of people. Influenza can be a serious illness. Symptoms include **fever, chills, headache, body aches, sore throat, runny nose, dry cough** and **a general feeling of exhaustion and sickness**. While the fever usually lasts two to five days, other symptoms can linger for 10 days or more. If you have the flu, stay home, rest and do not exercise.

You can start exercising again safely when you have been fever-free for at least 24 hours or longer. Not only can you harm your body by exercising with a fever but you also may be capable of spreading the flu virus to others. If you are an athlete and monitor your resting pulse regularly, one sure sign that you are well enough to exercise is a resting pulse rate no more than 10 beats per minute higher than normal.

Most people who exercise do not know their normal resting pulse rate, so here are some other tips about returning to exercise after the flu:

- **If you have chest congestion or a deep, painful cough, do not exercise.** Some people develop pneumonia after having the flu. Because flu weakens the body, bacteria that would normally be disposed of by the immune system can enter the lungs and grow.
- **Restart your exercise program with very light exercise that does not cause you to get out of breath.**
- **For the first week to 10 days after you are healthy, cut the number of times you exercise in half.** For instance, if you exercise daily, switch to every other day.
- **Gradually increase the intensity and length of your exercise.**
- **Stop exercising if you feel unusually short of breath or dizzy.**
- **Stay well hydrated.**

If you are unsure about resuming exercise after having the flu, schedule an appointment with us to discuss modifications to your program. This way, as your body heals from the illness, you can continue your fitness regime—at a reduced level—without missing a beat!

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## Physical Therapy Benefits Frozen Shoulder



**M**uch more common in women than men, frozen shoulder typically affects those in the 40- to 60-year age range. About 3% of the general population and 20% of those with diabetes suffer from this puzzling condition. Its technical name, **adhesive capsulitis**, comes from the area affected (the shoulder's joint capsule), and the fact that shrinkage and/or inflammation lead to scarring, which causes a "sticking" or adhesion of the tissue within.

The benefits of physical therapy vary according to the stage of frozen shoulder you experience. **Stage 1, the "freezing phase,"** during which the shoulder becomes increasingly painful and stiff, typically lasts from a few weeks to eight months. The shoulder is **resistant to aggressive physical therapy or pain reduction** and is very difficult to treat. When possible, passive or assisted range-of-motion exercises can help prevent loss of movement, and various pain-reducing methods can sometimes help. Some research indicates that anything beyond minimal treatment during the "freezing phase" could impede long-term success.

In **Stage 2, the "frozen or stiffening phase,"** treatment may become more effective. This phase usually lasts up to 12 months. **Although the shoulder is still very stiff, physical therapy can become more active as pain recedes.** To achieve this, a nerve block administered by an anesthesiologist can be effective, as can more conservative medications. The goal is to retain and regain as much motion as possible.

Therapy can be more aggressive and is better tolerated for **Stage 3, the "thawing or recovery phase,"** which can last up to 24 months. Sometimes, arthroscopic surgery, in which specific tight sections of the shoulder capsule are cut to "release" them, is recommended and helpful, but often frozen shoulder resolves fairly well without it.

If you experience frozen shoulder, schedule an appointment with us. We can assess the stage of the condition and devise a specific treatment program to get you back to full range of motion as quickly and completely as possible.

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## Pain After Falling on an Outstretched Hand



**A**fter a fall on an outstretched hand, you should have an x-ray to check for a bone fracture, which could certainly account for lingering pain. Often, the bone affected is the navicular bone, also known as the scaphoid, located between the base of the thumb and the radius (one of the two long bones of the forearm). Because a navicular fracture often causes pain and swelling on the thumb side of the wrist, gripping motions can be particularly painful.

A fall on the hand can cause a fracture in the radius itself, especially in older people. Immediate pain, swelling and visible evidence, such as the wrist's angle, indicate that something is very wrong. The usual treatment for a small navicular fracture includes **casting, splinting** and **a rehabilitation program** that includes range-of-motion and strengthening exercises.

Because the blood supply, which carries oxygen and nutrients to the scaphoid bone, is poor, hand and wrist pain after a fall commonly lasts weeks, even several months. A rehabilitation program for a sprain may include

- **splinting during the day and/or night**
- **icing**
- **exercises to promote strength, flexibility and function**
- **nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory pain medication (NSAIDs) or cortisone injections** if your doctor approves

Rehabilitation is an important part of healing because of the long immobilization time needed to treat most scaphoid fractures. If you have fallen on an outstretched hand, we can design an individualized program to achieve the best chance of alleviating that nagging, lingering pain and help you regain full range of motion and strength in your hand and wrist.

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## Three Rs of Managing the Pain of Fibromyalgia



**F**ibromyalgia is a **chronic condition**, leaving those who suffer from it struggling with muscle, tendon and ligament pain, as well as fatigue and tenderness throughout the body, where even gentle pressure triggers discomfort. Fortunately, physical therapy exercises can help manage the pain of this debilitating condition.

Part of the role of physical therapy is not only to help you cope with fibromyalgia but also to empower you to take an active part in your treatment. Even though you may take medication to alleviate pain, we focus on a whole-body solution by supporting you in the three Rs of pain management.

- **Reduce daily pain and stiffness**
- **Relieve deep muscle pain**
- **Restore range of motion, flexibility and strength**

Another important benefit of physical therapy is access to a broad range of safe, effective resources. Your treatment may include **deep tissue massage, low-impact aerobic conditioning, hydrotherapy, nerve stimulation** and **exercises you can perform at home**.

We can offer you a number of different approaches through a custom fibromyalgia-specific treatment program that suits your unique lifestyle and needs. We will also monitor your progress and provide practical advice as needed to keep you on track with your fibromyalgia management. If any changes to your condition occur, we can fine-tune your program to ensure that it complements any medications you may be taking. A successful program will equip you with the tools to experience an independent and healthy life as free of pain as possible.

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## **Treadmills: Getting the Best Results**



If you are new to working out on a treadmill, you will want to make sure that you not only get the best results but also that your program is a safe one. Whether you are an avid outdoor runner who wants to transition to the treadmill for indoor exercise or a complete exercise beginner, you might ask the following questions before purchasing or using this piece of equipment:

- **How far can I safely run?**
- **How fast should I be walking or running?**
- **What incline should I use?**
- **How do I know if I am working too hard?**

While outdoor running is exhilarating, it involves such challenges as bad weather, joint stress and safety. Treadmill running tends to be more forgiving on the body because it does not have the energy costs of running against wind and outdoor elements. However, it is generally best to start slowly on the treadmill, keeping a routine similar to your outdoor run but cutting back 10–20% during the initial couple of months.

If you are new to running and your doctor has given you clearance to start using a treadmill, we can help you reach your goals, whether you want to achieve

- **weight loss**
- **better endurance**
- **toning**
- **improved heart health**

We can answer any questions you may have regarding this type of exercise. We will assess your current fitness level and design a program to give you the best results from the treadmill. With our support, you can feel confident that, as your fitness improves, your program will progress with it, helping you to reach your full potential.