

Taking precautions helps avoid injuries

WHETHER YOU'RE a weekend athlete or a competitive long-distance runner, knowing proper exercise safety precautions will help you avoid injuries.

Today, too many people suffer from "exercise burnout" and sports-related injuries because they throw themselves into an exercise regimen without adequate preparation.

Many fitness experts believe that instead of being a "sweat and suffer" ordeal, an exercise routine should be an enjoyable part of life.

Here are 10 recommended exercise safety tips:

- Check with a doctor before engaging in any exercise regimen.

- Know your limitations. Don't expect to get back into shape overnight. Even experienced athletes should be aware of overexertion. Your body is the best indicator of your limitations — listen to it carefully.

- Pace yourself. Don't exercise too vigorously. "Pain does not necessarily mean gain" is a good exercise motto to adopt.

- Proper ventilation and clothing are important. Wear non-restrictive attire that makes you feel comfortable. Fresh air is good, but cold drafts should be avoided. Upon completion of a strenuous workout, put on warm clothing to allow the body to cool down gradually.

- Learn to prevent back injuries. Exercises that concentrate on the abdominal muscles require extra safety precautions for people prone to back problems. While

doing these exercises, flattening the back to the floor will relieve unnecessary strain on the back. In order to keep the lower back on the floor, bend the knees and tuck in chin to chest gently without reducing your airflow. When doing any forward bending movements always remember to keep the knees relaxed.

- Stretch out and warm up. Before you start working out, it is important to loosen and limber your muscles. You'll avoid injury and enjoy the physical movement more.

- Bouncing stretches are too harsh. Bounce-stretch movements create tensions and shortening of muscles, which may result in injuries. Instead, hold at a slow stretch for 15 seconds to elongate the muscle.

- Cardiovascular routines (after continuous movement) should not come to a screeching halt. Keep moving to allow the heart to gradually slow and recover. If you suffer from nausea or vomiting after exercising, you either are exercising too vigorously or cooling down too quickly. Be sure to have a more gradual and longer cool-down period.

- Learn to breathe properly. The correct way to breathe is in through the nose and out through the mouth. A good signal that you aren't breathing properly is extreme breathlessness lasting for more than 10 minutes after immediately finishing exercise.

- Learn to relax. Exercising should be an enjoyable experience. It is one of the most important methods to relieve stress.



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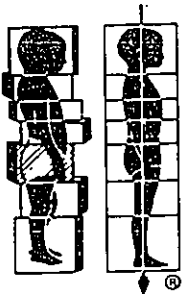
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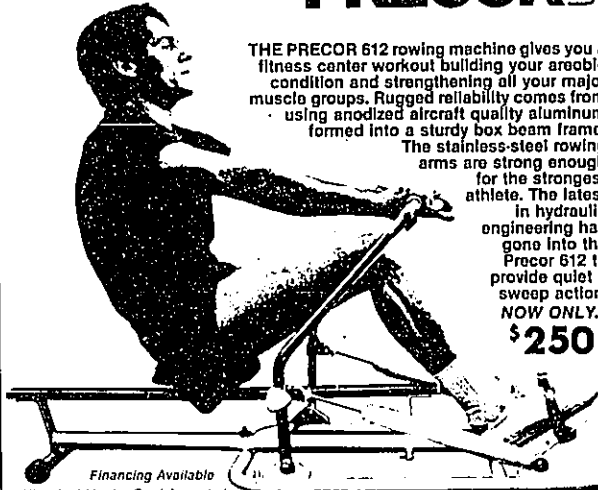
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