

# The Medical Minute: Don't overdo it, you weekend warrior

August 18 2011, By Matthew Silvis

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Chris Garguilo, a junior and THON 5K participant, runs along Curtin Road past discarded water cups, remnants of a water station set up by THON committee members to refresh the more than 4,000 who turned out to run through campus on Sunday, Oct. 17, in support of the Penn State Dance Marathon. Credit: Andy Colwell

There are many benefits to exercise. Exercise not only helps prevent a variety of medical disorders -- including heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis -- but it is increasingly recommended for treatment of health problems. Exercise improves and maintains muscle mass, endurance and mobility and can improve appearance and self confidence. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that all healthy adults ages 18 to 65 years engage

in moderate-intensity aerobic exercise for a minimum of 30 minutes, five days a week. Similar recommendations exist for adults older than 65 years of age with the caveat that aerobic fitness, flexibility and balance be taken into account.

Many individuals have difficulties finding the time to exercise five days a week given the demands of work and family. The term “weekend warrior” describes an individual who compresses his weekly activity into long durations on the weekend instead of exercising throughout the week. Common examples of weekend warrior activities include playing basketball for an afternoon, hiking for four hours or doing five hours of yard work.

Weekend warriors are particularly susceptible to overuse injuries. A person's musculoskeletal system changes with age. Bone mass and strength decrease, joint cartilage breaks down, discs in our spine become compressed and tendons tighten. A person with an aging musculoskeletal system trying to compress his weekly activity into long durations on a weekend (and maybe even trying to do a sporting activity that they have not done in a long time) can readily overwhelm their musculoskeletal system. This perfect storm can easily lead to an overuse injury.

For those individuals who consider themselves weekend warriors, the following tips may be useful:

1. Be realistic and respect your body's limits. Push yourself but with the right precautions. Pain that persists into the next day may be an early indicator of a musculoskeletal injury and that you did too much. Consider adjusting your schedule to try to exercise throughout the week.
2. Cross train regularly and try to engage in nonweight-bearing exercise (swimming, cycling, elliptical) weekly. Weight lifting is encouraged to strengthen muscles and increase your bone density. Make sure to rest

between weight lifting repetitions and days. At least one rest day should be taken weekly.

3. Watch diet to ensure proper nutrition for both exercise performance and for rebuilding muscle and energy stores after exercise.

4. For sport specific injury prevention and tips on proper conditioning, get good advice from a health care professional and/or personal trainer.

5. Pay close attention to and replace your equipment (old cleats, worn shoes, etc.). For example, running shoes should be changed every 4-6 months or 300-500 miles.

6. Lastly, expand your definition of success. While running a 5K in a certain amount of time or lifting a certain weight may have been your previous measure of success, remember the incredible health benefits of staying physically active.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

Citation: The Medical Minute: Don't overdo it, you weekend warrior (2011, August 18) retrieved 19 April 2024 from

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