

Let the Olympics inspire your fitness goals

August 2 2016, by Dipali Pathak

If Olympic fever has you itching to go for the gold in a new sport, a Baylor College of Medicine sports medicine expert has advice on how to get started.

"Watching the Olympics is great motivation to get back into a sport that you used to play, become a fan of something you haven't seen before, or even find something new to try if you are already physically active but bored with your routine," said Dr. Theodore Shybut, assistant professor of [orthopedic surgery](#) at Baylor. "However, it's important to be realistic about your current level of fitness and your goals."

Shybut suggests starting new activities at a low intensity level to get used to the training, rather than aiming to accomplish Olympian workouts on the first try. Ramping up over time should help minimize missed time due to soreness or injury.

"It's also important to remember that Olympians train for years to accomplish what you see on television. They learn new maneuvers or build performance one element at a time. Gymnasts practice by falling into foam pits – they don't attempt to stick the landing the first time they execute a movement. Sprinters do specific drills in training to work on their start, attack, finish, form and so on."

Shybut also notes the importance of overall conditioning, including cross-training and varying workouts to emphasize power, endurance, recovery, etc. Additionally he notes there are other keys to performance such as establishing routines, coaching, nutrition, mental preparation, team

building, proper rest and sleep habits. Some athletes consult sports psychologists who help them visualize their goal to help them achieve it. All of these elements come together to help an Olympian achieve their goals.

If it's a sport that you already played that you want to get back into, and you already have the knowledge and understanding of it to get started, Shybut says go for it, but bear in mind you have had some time away and set realistic goals for your training.

If it's a new sport that you've never tried before, Shybut suggests seeking out an adult recreational league or a coach to help get you started.

"It's important to train intelligently – you're not going to achieve your goals if you're injured," he said.

The Olympics also are a great opportunity to expose children to new activities. Shybut recommends keeping their interests ahead of your own.

"If your dream was to be an Olympic swimmer, it doesn't necessarily mean that's what your child's dream is," he said. "Let them develop as athletes and then follow their interests."

If children show a great deal of interest and a lot of talent, seek the expertise of a coach who has a good track record to help them get to the next level of their training. If nothing else, enjoy the Games as elite athletes compete on the world stage for Olympic glory.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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