

Sports after lockdown: take it slow

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(HealthDay)—If you love to play sports, it's tough advice to follow after months of lockdown: Go easy.

You may be tempted to jump right back into things as playing fields, courts, gyms and other athletic facilities reopen, but it's best to take some time for conditioning first, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) says.

"For many sports, it has been three months since the last practice. Cardiovascular conditioning, [muscle strength](#) and flexibility may have declined with [the] need to social distance," said [orthopedic surgeon](#) and AAOS spokesperson Dr. Nicholas DiNubile.

"Regardless of your activity, it is important to remember to ease into it and be patient with yourself," he said in an AAOS news release. "If you give yourself time, the skills will come back."

People who weren't active before the pandemic might want to view the reopening of facilities as an opportunity to improve their health and fitness levels, or to take up a new sport or activity.

If you plan to restart or start an exercise program, here are some guidelines:

- Don't increase the intensity or duration of the activity more than 10% per week.
- Stay hydrated during your workouts.
- Always warm up and stretch before beginning a workout.
- Cold muscles are more prone to injury. Warm up with jumping jacks, stationary cycling or running or walking in place for three to five minutes.
- Wear appropriate footwear.
- Use appropriate proper protective equipment, and establish a routine you can maintain.

"Enthusiasm to get outside is high, and the potential for overuse injuries, broken bones and strained muscles, bones or joints is now heightened," DiNubile said.

"If we suddenly increase the intensity, duration or frequency of activity more than what our bodies had become accustomed to while social distancing, it can be a shock to the body's soft tissues and joints, causing inflammation and breakdown," he explained. "To set yourself up for success, have a realistic view of your current condition and celebrate small victories along the way."

To prevent the spread of the coronavirus, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urges everyone using a gym or fitness center to limit indoor group activities, maintain 6 feet of distance with others, take precautions and limit contact with shared equipment, wash hands and wear a face covering.

More information: The U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute offers a [guide to physical fitness](#).

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