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BOOMERITIS

I don't know about you, but it sure is harder to get moving in the mornings lately. My joints ache, my muscles are stiff and since when did mild exercise on the weekend hurt on Monday.

If you can relate to this, you may be suffering from "Boomeritis". Some say that 50 is the new 30 but they forgot to tell my knees and back.

Baby Boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, are much more active than the generations that preceded them. Prior generations may have labored hard at their job, but until recently, the masses did not participate in sports and exercise like we do now. In fact, it was this generation that ushered in the fitness craze of the 1970's and 1980's. So we have people who are more active and are doing so for decades. We all want to be able to do at 45, what we could do at 25 and do at 65, what we could do at 45.

What this amounts to is overuse and gradual wear and tear. The injuries that occur are usually tendonitis, arthritis (wearing out of the cartilage of the joints), tendon tears and stress fractures. Our muscle tissue decreases in elasticity and eventually forms scar tissue and this makes us stiff.

In 2008, 166,000 Boomers sought medical treatment for exercise and exercise equipment related injuries. That is only the number who sought treatment, not to mention those who treated themselves.

Another factor is that we tend to be weekend warriors. Going all out on Saturday and Sunday and paying for it until Wednesday.

So what is one to do? Be less active and grow old gracefully? NO, do not go down without a fight. The key is actually to stay active and perhaps even increase your amount of exercise, but in a healthy manner. Do not play through pain, listen to your body and be proactive with a preventive fitness plan.

If you have any medical condition, check with your doctor first before starting a new exercise program. There are several factors that are important to stay active and stay healthy as we get older.

- Warm up and stretch before and after physical activity. Warm up is different than stretching. Warming up is basically simulating your movements in a slower manner to get your muscles moving and warmed up. This will stretch them in a dynamic manner. The philosophy has changed and static stretching where one stretches and holds that stretch for a longer period of time is best performed after physical activity.
- Do not exercise just on the weekends. We need activity throughout the week as well. Try to incorporate at least 30 minutes every day of some form of exercise into your routine.
- Take lessons in the sports that you participate in even if you have been playing these for long periods of time. Improper form can lead to injuries.
- Proper equipment and shoes are extremely important. Make sure that shoes and other equipment are replaced on a regular basis.
- Listen to your body as mentioned above. Pain that persists or compromises your ability to perform activities is something that should not be ignored.
- Obey the 10% rule. Do not try to increase your activity by more than 10% at a time. Build up endurance gradually especially with strength training and endurance training.
- Balance your activities. The three areas to be focused on are strength, flexibility and endurance/ cardiovascular fitness, so utilize a fitness program that includes weight training, stretching and some form of cardiovascular exercise.
- Mix it up. As mentioned above, many of these injuries are overuse injuries, so try to vary the muscle groups that are utilized from day to day. This is where the concept of "Cross training" came from.
- Nutrition. A well-balanced diet is key to giving your body the energy and nutrients it needs to tolerate exercise and to continue to feel fit.

Certainly adhering to these principles is no guarantee that one will be injury free, but certainly will better your chances of enjoying your years and staying fit as we grow older.

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