



Play It Safe With Exercise

COVID-19 has sent us indoors, looking for alternatives to outdoor physical activity. You may try new exercises or moves you find online. Before you put on your workout clothes, follow these guidelines to avoid getting sidelined with an injury.

First rule: Be fit enough to perform your exercise. You're more likely to get injured doing activities that are too physically demanding for you. Even if you already pursue regular exercise, do some training for a few weeks by lightly working the affected muscle groups. Ask your health care provider for advice.

Smart moves everyone needs:

- ✓ Progress gradually to protect vulnerable areas.
- ✓ Stay aware of what you're doing.
- ✓ Add no more than 10% speed or distance per week (e.g., stationary bicycle).
- ✓ Stop when you start to feel fatigued.
- ✓ Warm up to raise blood flow to your muscles.
- ✓ Wear proper shoes.

Fact: The most common injuries are ankle sprain, groin pull, hamstring strain, shin pain, stress fractures, knee and shoulder injuries, dislocations and tendonitis.

Expert advice: The stronger your muscles, the lower your risk of injury.

Take the knees: They bear a lot of weight and movement during sports and other exercise — the added impact of an aggressive workout is risky for them. By strengthening the muscles around the knees you improve joint stability and help prevent soreness and injury. In the same way, strengthening your lower-back muscles can reduce back strain during exceptional physical demands.

Strength training 2 to 3 days

a week can help protect your muscles, bones, joints and the connective tissues of the ligaments and tendons. To avoid injury during any activity, muscle up.

If you feel strain or get injured:

- ✓ Don't play through your pain.
- ✓ Rest and elevate the affected area until the pain eases up.
- ✓ Ice the area for 10 to 15 minutes a few times a day.
- ✓ Take an anti-inflammatory medicine to reduce swelling and pain.

**See your provider if you have acute symptoms, can't apply weight to the injured area, or a bone or joint appears deformed.
Severe injuries might require physical therapy.**