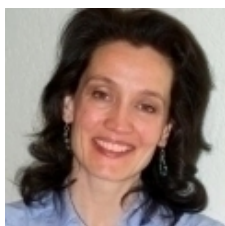


Staying healthy means incorporating exercise into busy lives

By Mandy Kendall

I went for my first bike ride of the summer last weekend and the next day it was pretty obvious that I had done too much, too soon. Everything hurt, not just the area of my body that was supposed to be protected by those “oh so attractive” padded cycling shorts that make you feel like you’re wearing adult diapers.

It is times like these that I have to admit that I’m not getting any younger and I should be kinder to my body. Let’s face it, there is nothing new about the fact that exercise is good for us, and just generally makes us feel better. However, new research has shown that exercise lessens our chance of Alzheimer’s disease, reduces our risk of stroke and increases brain function. So, to all of us who are perhaps not quite as invincible as we’d like to think we are, here are a few *Qwik-e* tips on how to stay active for longer, and enjoy it.



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Gently does it – Stressing cold muscles increases risk of damaging them. Anything you can do to gently warm up the muscles before you put any load on them will help prevent soreness and potential injury. Walking before you start

jogging, gentle stretches before you garden and practice strokes before you start that game of tennis or golf will all go toward protecting our most precious asset, our bodies. I know we've all heard this before, but be honest now, how many of us really do it?

Knowing squat – The squat is reputed to be the best exercise in maintaining lower back and leg strength. Once you have the technique right (it's just like the action of sitting down in a chair, except without the chair) it can be done anywhere and works all the major lower body muscles. It's best to have someone watch you when you do your first few (ideally a professional trainer) to make sure you're doing it correctly. The next best option would be to watch an online video tutorial. I like this one.

Target the core – Again, this is an area that is often referred to when people talk about exercise. What is it really all about? Your core, as the name suggests, is the center around which the rest of your body revolves. Your core muscles support your spine and protect it from the stresses inflicted on it from other parts of your body. An unstable or weak core leaves the rest of your body vulnerable to injury. The best core strengthening exercises involve any position that requires the body to stabilize itself. A good example is an exercise called the plank. Whilst strengthening your shoulders and biceps, the plank also exercises your core muscles as they work to keep your body suspended in a straight line. Simply get into a push up position with your arms, and back, straight and hold it for 30 seconds (don't forget to breathe). If that's a bit tough on your arms to start then rest on your elbows instead of your hands.

Play flamingo – Not only does standing on one leg strengthen our core muscles it also gives our brain a good workout too as it takes a lot of brain activity to keep us from falling over. Just 20 to 30 seconds a few times a day is enough. Just remember to switch legs. When you can balance comfortably

without wobbling, try closing your eyes.

Listen to your body – As tempting as it is to work off a muscle or joint twinge it is wise to back off from training that area until the discomfort is gone. Minor muscle or soft tissue damage should noticeably improve over two or three days. If it's taking longer than that consult a healthcare professional who specializes in soft tissue treatment.

Stretch it out – Muscles get shorter when we use them and don't automatically re-lengthen when we stop using them. If a muscle is left to cool down in its shorten state, it is prone to injury (a bit like silly putty which breaks apart easily when it's cold but stretches very easily when it's warm). While muscles are still warm (no more than 10-15 minutes after you stop exercising) gently stretch them back to their proper length and they will be ready to go the next time you need them.

Feed your muscles – At any age, but especially as we get older, our muscles need feeding after we've given them a workout. A protein drink after your training is a good way of helping muscles recoup and rebuild, ready for the next session.

Give yourself a break – Nobody says you have to exercise every day. A day off every week, especially if you're feeling fatigued, will reap rewards in the long term. Life is a long race, you should take it easy every now and then.

Important note – As with any exercise please consult your doctor or a professional physical trainer before attempting any new program.

I am away for the next two weeks so look forward to reconnecting with you when I get back.

Until next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe, which aligns wellness seekers with their ideal wellness provider. If you have questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and well-being topic, drop her an email at connect@healthconnective.com or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.