

## **Keep Those New Year Exercise Resolutions Injury Free**

Many Canadians resolve to exercise and increase their fitness levels at the beginning of a new year. While exercise is certainly preferable to a sedentary lifestyle, people who do too much, too soon, run the risk of injury. The Canadian Physiotherapy Association wants to remind individuals that fitness is a journey not a destination. Working out and expecting to look better than last year in two or three weeks is unrealistic, and can lead to over-training, burnout, and/or injury.

### **Here are some fitness tips to reduce the risk of injury in 2008:**

- Individuals who have or think they have pre-existing medical conditions should consult a health care provider before beginning an exercise program.
- Start slowly if you have been sedentary or are starting a new activity.
- Be realistic in your goal setting.
- Exercise does not have to be done in a gym. It can be a “lifestyle” activity such as going for a brisk walk or hike, or using the stairs.
- Choose an exercise or activity that you enjoy. The one you like doing is the one you will stick with.
- Your fitness program is a gradual process. A minimum of 30 – 60 minutes of daily activity interspersed throughout the day will achieve and maintain mobility and develop a healthier physique.
- When you are ready, a total fitness program should include aerobic conditioning, muscle strengthening, and flexibility training on most days of the week.
- If you are overweight, consider beginning with low-impact activities such as swimming, cycling, or walking. These activities put less strain on joints.
- If you are in an exercise program and are not losing weight,, don’t get discouraged. There are other health related benefits associated with physical activity even when weight loss does not occur.
- Keep a log to track your progress. This can help to motivate you and highlight areas that need more work.
- If you are fatigued, lower your intensity regardless of whether or not you are fit. Listen to your body – it will tell if you are working too hard.

The YMCA has a variety of programs, equipment, and staff to help you meet your new year’s fitness goals.