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AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION PAYS BIG DIVIDENDS WHILE WORKING OUT

PEABODY, MA, Nov. 30, 2006 – With winter setting in, many of us are thinking about hitting the gym to get in shape. That often means including weight-training as part of the routine.

While the benefits of exercise are undeniable, it's also important to plan your program properly to prevent injuries while you're working out. Jonathan R. Perryman, M.D. of New England Orthopedic Specialists offers the following tips to make your workout as productive as possible and reduce the risk of training-related injuries in the process.

Perryman, who specializes in management of complex sports problems, is well-acquainted with preventing and treating athletic training injuries, as he was a team physician for the New York Jets, New York Rangers and Hofstra University athletic teams, and currently serves as the team physician for the North Shore Spirit baseball team.

1. Start your workout with a good warm-up. This might be 10 minutes of cardio-vascular exercise, such as a fast walk on the treadmill or the elliptical machine. This routine gets blood flowing into your muscles and warms them up. It is a critical part of the workout as tight muscles can easily be injured.
2. Include stretching as part of your routine. The warm-up should include a period of stretching before you begin lifting weights. It's also a good idea to finish your work-out session with another set of stretches to keep your muscles loose.
3. Don't try to do too much, too fast. This is especially important with weight lifting exercises, especially if you are just starting an exercise program. "Everyone can benefit from an exercise program, but you shouldn't feel that you need to make it a 'crash course.' It's important to build up gradually and avoid the temptation to do too much, too fast. Be smart and approach the program with moderation. That will reap the most rewards and reduce the risk of injury while you're getting in shape," says Perryman.
4. Determine whether you want to tone your body or build muscle mass, and adjust your program accordingly. Perryman notes that most people starting an exercise program are aiming to tone their muscles, not necessarily add bulk. To increase muscle tone, he suggests using lighter weights and more repetitions. In contrast, people looking to add muscle bulk will use more weight and fewer reps, but again, he advises building up gradually.

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5. Learn the proper technique when using machines or lifting weights to prevent problems. “We see a lot of shoulder or knee injuries that can be prevented by using the right technique,” says Perryman. For example, bench presses stress the front of the shoulder and can exacerbate existing rotator cuff problems. If you are doing any kind of overhead press, make sure to keep the weight in front of your neck – never behind your neck. If squats are part of your routine, don’t go beyond 90°; bending more than that can injure your knees. Using leg extension machines can be problematic for people with knee issues. For those people, Perryman advises either skipping this exercise or not bending their knees beyond 45° while doing leg extensions.

What about the old adage, “no pain, no gain”? According to Perryman, it’s important to distinguish between a feeling of muscle fatigue or soreness from pain. “Feeling that your muscles are getting fatigued during a work-out is one thing, but if an exercise hurts, that is not OK, and you should stop immediately. Either eliminate that exercise or lower the demands, such as lowering the weight. If the pain persists, you need to follow up with your doctor.”

Dr. Perryman is one of six fellowship-trained, highly experienced and Board-certified physicians who comprise New England Orthopedic Specialists (formerly Orthopaedic Trauma and Reconstructive Associates). Located in Peabody, the practice is the premier orthopedic care center in northeast Massachusetts, and is committed to providing patients with the most current, sophisticated, technologically-advanced treatments for virtually any orthopedic need. For more information, contact New England Orthopedic Specialists at 978-531-0800.

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