

Exercising and Injuries

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It is now about 36 hours before I embark on a 26.2 mile journey (the Milwaukee Lakefront Marathon) in a quest to finish with a fast enough time to qualify for the 2005 Boston Marathon. I have been training for the marathon for the past 5 months. Over the past couple of months I have encountered a few injuries that impeded my training. Luckily, as a physical therapist, I was able to recognize these injuries right away and take the right steps to prevent them from developing into more serious and potentially chronic problems which may have prevented me from participating in the marathon.

All too often I have seen patients that come in for therapy several months and even years after onset of their symptoms. By this time the injury has become chronic and intensified in severity which often times limits a patient's strength, mobility and ability to perform many work related, household and recreational activities without significant pain and difficulty. The longer an injury is present and the more severe it becomes, the longer it takes to heal and restore normal function. Many chronic injuries (e.g. rotator cuff tendonitis that develops into a muscle tear) worsen to the point that conservative physical therapy does not help and surgical intervention may be required.

In most cases, these injuries develop gradually and can be easily remedied or prevented by recognizing the cause and taking the proper precautions to prevent further aggravation. The biggest mistake that most people make when experiencing a new pain that does not go away within a few days to a couple of weeks is believing that it will just go away in the same way that other aches and pains have gone away in the past. As a result, they keep on exercising and performing the same aggravating activities which eventually causes more and more pain.

In my case, I developed a couple of issues with Achilles and hip flexor tendonitis. Right away I recognized the problem and knew when I needed a couple days of rest, cold to treat pain and inflammation, and what stretches to do. I was also able to recognize when it was safe to run and what pace/distance I could run without making matters worse. Despite the impending marathon and the desire to put in hard training sessions through the pain, I kept a level head and let my body heal by resting or not going as hard or long on training runs. As a result, I am now painfree and ready to tackle the marathon on October 3.

To learn more about your anatomy, potential causes of pain throughout different parts of your body, and to find out how physical therapy can help get you back to exercising without pain I recommend visiting www.apta.org. On their home page is a tab for CONSUMERS. Then click on Physical Therapy and Your Body to learn more about your body from posture to osteoporosis to the different joints in your body. Under the CONSUMERS, web page you can also find out about what Physical Therapy is and what PT's and PTA's do as well as find a PT in your area.