

# From couch potato to weekend warrior— how to avoid injuries when resuming an active routine



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CORNER

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The short winter days (and of course COVID) might have turned many of us into physically inactive couch potatoes. As Spring has finally arrived, you may be planning a more active lifestyle of regular exercise, but mostly over weekends. Transforming from a couch potato to a weekend warrior comes with injury risks, though, if you are not careful.

## Weekend warriors face a higher injury risk and take longer to recover

Weekend warriors – those of us who have sudden bursts of energy and engage in strenuous activities mostly over weekends – are much more at risk to develop serious injuries to our muscles, tendons, and ligaments. Remember, when we are inactive couch potatoes, our muscles, tendons, and ligaments are not used to being moved and are not ready for the sudden high demand of repetitive motion, jumping and impact. This risk exists regardless of weekend warriors' age or the preferred weekend exercise activity – from playing a game of tennis or golf, shooting baskets, paddling with a kayak for miles, bike riding or skateboarding.

Moreover, weekend warriors tend to take longer to recover from injuries than athletes. Professional athletes and individuals who follow a regular structured exercise program can rebound from serious injuries in a couple of weeks. They work out regularly, maintain a high level of conditioning of their bodies, and their muscles have high levels of elasticity (including flexibility and explosive strength) which contribute to a quicker recovery rate.

## Practical tips for weekend warriors to prevent injuries

Transforming your body from a sedentary couch potato state to an active and healthy state is a process that requires a positive mindset, moderation, and regular exercise.

1. Make your health and fitness a priority. If you feel you don't have time to exercise due to your busy schedule or because you have overcommitted your time to help others during the day, you need to change your mindset and make the commitment to yourself first. Visualize the end goal what you want to achieve: you want to have a healthier lifestyle, lose weight, feel more fit and energized. Now take charge of your day.

2. Find ways to exercise more regularly,

even briefly. Include more exercise in your daily life. Consider these simple examples: a) set your alarm to get up half an hour earlier to walk at a fast pace or do yoga; b) when you go to the store, do not circle around to find the closest available parking spot. Instead, park in the far corner, and maximize the distance you will walk, even if just 50 to 100 yards farther; and c) use the stairs instead of taking the elevator. The American Heart Association recommends we should participate in 150 minutes of moderate vigorous exercises or 75 minutes of vigorous exercises per week. The weekend warriors that limit their 75 minutes of vigorous exercises to weekends and return to a sedentary lifestyle during the rest of the week are more prone to injuries than the group that spread their moderate vigorous exercises out during the week.

3. Relax through motion. Curling up on the couch after a stressful day at work is not your only option to relax. Replace your couch-relax time twice to thrice a week with a short session of moderate exercise. For example, go for a 20-minute walk, swim laps in your pool, or stretch and do yoga. Replacing inactive relaxation with physical activity will improve your mind-body connection and contribute to prioritizing your health.

4. Gradually add weight bearing activity to your exercise routine. "Weight bearing" does not mean weightlifting but engaging in physical activity that allows your body to fight against the forces of gravity. For example, walking uphill, jogging, stair climbing and playing sports such as tennis and golf. Research shows that physical weight bearing activity has several health benefits, such as a) increasing oxygen and blood flow, b) releasing ATP (adenosine triphosphate) the energy supplier to our cells, and c) increasing endorphins, the chemical produced by our nervous system that helps us cope with pain and stress

5. Gradually add vigorous exercises to your weekly routine. Do not overextend yourself. Do not expect to run the 100-yard sprint within a week of starting your renewed active lifestyle. Approach it as a building process: first lay a sound foundation for your muscle-memory to return to an active state and then add more layers of physical activity and more rigorous exercises over time.

6. Before you exercise, always warm-up and include sport-specific dynamic stretching.

7. Remember to hydrate when you exercise.

The positive benefits from transforming



your inactive lifestyle to daily physical activities will not only prevent weekend warrior injuries, but also strengthen your muscles and improve your balance and stability because your body is used to being in motion (and your muscle memory increases). Also listen to your body; if your exercise activities cause pain or discomfort, adjust your exercise routine, and consider

consulting with your physician or physical therapist.

*Lize Lubbe is the owner of Lize Lubbe Physical Therapy with its main practice located at 892 Route 35 in Cross River and a PT Studio in the premises of Apex Fitness (where her team focus on the rehabilitation of sports-related injuries). Learn more by calling 914-875-9430, emailing [contact@lizelubbept.com](mailto:contact@lizelubbept.com) or visiting [www.lizelubbept.com](http://www.lizelubbept.com)*



**Lize Lubbe Physical Therapy (LLPT) has opened a PT Studio on the premises of Apex Fitness (at Orchard Square at Cross River) to focus on sports-related physical therapy rehabilitation services.**

*Our PT Studio at Apex will serve the needs of high school and college athletes, runners, golfers and tennis players, devotees and "weekend warrior" work-out gym members, and non-gym members, and other sport enthusiasts to continue their fitness goals, free of pain and to restore full pain-free mobility after injury.*

*Our PT Studio will be staffed with physical therapists who specialize in working with athletes, young and old. Our team provides dedicated, personable hands-on physical therapy rehabilitation services to help you prevent injuries and, if injured, to accelerate your recovery.*

### The professional services of our team at the PT Studio include the following:

- A free walk-in basic sports-related injury screening of about 10 minutes
- Guidance on sport-specific warm-up and exercise programs
- Brief assessment and Kinesio taping
- Individualized full PT rehabilitation treatment programs to recover from injury or surgery with full access to all the equipment at Apex Fitness, to get you back practicing your chosen sport, pain-free

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