Don’t Let Ragweed Stop Your Fitness Routine

Whether you are a walker, runner, cyclist or golfer, you probably look forward to early fall, when the dog days of summer are behind us and temperatures become milder. Yet for the 23 million Americans allergic to ragweed, this time of year can be prime allergy season. Although we usually associate seasonal allergies with the spring, 17 species of ragweed in the United States bloom and produce a fine powder from August to November, usually peaking in mid-September.

Ragweed allergies can bring on the same symptoms as other pollen allergies, including sneezing, watery eyes, nasal congestion, headaches and an itchy throat. They can also aggravate asthma symptoms. If ragweed or other seasonal allergies get in the way of your normal fitness routine, consider the following:

• **Consult an allergist/immunologist.** A physician can determine the source of your allergic reaction, prescribe a course of treatment and make personalized recommendations for you.

• **Breathe through your nose as much as possible.** The nasal passages filter out irritants and pollutants and keep them from getting into your body.

• **Check the pollen count for your area.** If a local weather report shows high levels of pollen, avoid exercising outdoors. Pollen counts are usually highest between 5 a.m. and 10 a.m., and at dusk.

• **Avoid areas with large amounts of allergens**, such as fields and forests.

For many people, over-the-counter antihistamines provide relief from seasonal allergies. However, if your allergies prevent you from exercising outdoors, seek indoor exercising options. It might make sense to **join a gym** or an indoor pool so you can maintain your fitness during the months when outdoor allergens reach their height.

From aerobic machines to weights, we can develop a **set of exercises** that will help keep you in shape on those days and weeks when ragweed and other pollens keep you from exercising outdoors. That way, you can stay in shape while you breathe easily.
Rhofibrosis, also known as “stiff knee syndrome,” occurs when excessive scar tissue forms around a joint, limiting range of motion and causing pain and disability. It can be a complication of knee replacement or anterior cruciate ligament surgery, with infections and bleeding as known contributing factors. Of the roughly 720,000 knee replacements performed every year in the United States, arthrofibrosis occurs after approximately 6% of these surgeries.

The longer your knee remains immobile after surgery, the greater your chance of developing this condition. If you recently underwent knee replacement surgery, you need to remember that some subsequent knee stiffness is normal and may not be a sign of arthrofibrosis. Arthrofibrosis is usually characterized by the following symptoms:

- **Walking with a bent knee.** Inability to straighten your knee or difficulty contracting your quadriceps muscles may be signs of stiffness and the development of arthrofibrosis.

- **Worsening pain in the knee.** In the weeks and months after surgery, pain should decrease gradually. Increasing pain may be a sign of arthrofibrosis.

- **Warmth and swelling around the knee.** While these are often common after knee surgery, see your physician if they persist, because they, too, may signal the development of this painful condition.

Mild cases of arthrofibrosis may be resolved with **intensive physical therapy** alone. Other treatments include **manipulation** under anesthesia, when a physician manipulates the knee in a controlled fashion to break up the scar tissue. Surgery may also be an option for some patients.

Regardless of the course of treatment, physical therapy will play an important role. We will work with you to restore your range of motion with **passive stretching** and **manual mobilization** techniques. If your physician decides that surgery is the best course of treatment, we will work with you for six to eight weeks after surgery to maintain the **range of motion** gained with the surgery and keep inflammation under control.

As you pursue treatment, be sure to **call our office** so we can work with you and your physician to help regain your range of motion and **resume your daily activities** without pain or stiffness.
Get Hip to the Source of Groin Pain

Groin pain can have many causes, including a pulled muscle, hernia or pinched nerve in the back. However, one of the most common causes of groin pain is actually hip pain that is “referred” to the groin. While we usually associate our hip with the outside of the hip bone, the hip joint is actually located deeper inside our body. Hip pain is often felt in the groin because of the way our nerves are organized.

You may be able to determine the cause of pain yourself by lying down on your back and rolling your leg in and out. If doing so causes pain in your groin, then you are probably dealing with pain referred from the hip. When experiencing such pain, it is recommended that you avoid any activity that makes it worse, lose weight if you are overweight, wear comfortable shoes and avoid running downhill.

If your pain lasts for more than a week or if you think it is caused by an injury, see your physician. He or she will likely have you lie down and will put your hip through a series of motions. If performing these motions replicates the groin pain, then what you are feeling most likely originates in the hip. A physician will also diagnose the exact cause of the pain, which can include a fracture, labral tear, strain, arthritis-bursitis or hip impingement syndrome.

For most of these conditions, we can design a physical therapy regimen to strengthen the muscles around your hip so that they can better support your hip and keep it stable. In addition, strengthening these muscles can relieve pain and prevent future injury. We will also prescribe stretching exercises, especially as adjuncts to the strengthening exercises that will improve your flexibility and range of motion, and prevent soreness.

Make an appointment with your physician to properly diagnose and treat your condition. As your treatment progresses, see us for an individualized program of physical therapy to help you resume your daily activities with minimal pain.
Exercise Your Way to a Better Night’s Sleep

Do you have trouble falling asleep at night? Do you wake up in the middle of the night and find yourself unable to get back to sleep? You are not alone. More than one-third of adults in the United States report either trouble falling asleep or daytime drowsiness. Not only is insomnia frustrating but it can take a toll on your productivity during the day. While pharmacy shelves are full of products promising help, a regular exercise routine can help you fall asleep faster naturally and give you a better night’s sleep.

Insomnia can result from stress, anxiety, medical conditions, medications, stimulants and even age. While treatments range from behavioral therapy to relaxation techniques, one of the most common treatments is adoption of a regular exercise routine. Even 10 minutes of aerobic exercise a day—such as walking or cycling—can improve your quality of sleep.

Published in the journal *Mental Health and Physical Activity*, a 2011 study of more than 2600 adults found that people who get the nationally recommended 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per week report a 65% improvement in sleep quality and less sleepiness during the day. They also report fewer leg cramps while sleeping and less difficulty concentrating while tired. Exercise can also make people more productive at work and more attentive in school, according to the authors of the study.

Of course, exercise has a host of other benefits beyond better sleep, from burning calories to reducing your risk for heart disease, high cholesterol, diabetes and other chronic diseases. Exercise is also known to boost energy levels and make people feel happier and more relaxed.

For a natural way to fight insomnia, call our office for an appointment. We can design an exercise routine that works with your schedule and any physical limitations you may have. With our help, you will feel better during the day and say goodbye to counting sheep at night.
Tennis and Golf: Keep Swinging as You Age

It’s a hard fact to swallow: Age eventually catches up with all of us, no matter how active we may be. Unless we work to maintain strength and flexibility, we slowly lose both as we age. Even the most avid golfers often notice that they lose distance in their drives and tennis players lose velocity in their serves over the years—an issue that is especially noticeable when older athletes compete with younger players. Fortunately, it is possible to minimize this loss.

To maintain strength, flexibility and power as you age, you need to develop an exercise routine that focuses on these aspects. A good regimen should be performed at least two days a week and contain the following components:

• **Warm-up.** Start with a brisk 10-minute walk or light jog to raise your body temperature and increase blood flow to your extremities. A series of dynamic stretches afterward can also help increase blood flow to your muscles and extremities.

• **Resistance training.** Lifting weights—usually performing three sets of 12 to 15 repetitions—will help build general strength. Squats and lunges can help maintain lower body strength and prevent knee injuries.

• **Core exercises.** The hips can become stiff and immobile with age. Side crunches, lunges, medicine ball throws and other exercises that work your hips and core will help you maintain stability and power on the golf course or the tennis court.

• **Static stretching.** Conclude your workout with 10 minutes of stretches, holding each for 10 to 30 seconds, to sustain flexibility.

Maintaining a high level of fitness not only keeps you competitive on the court and on the green but it also reduces the chance that you will be sidelined by an injury. Before beginning a new exercise routine, it is best to work with a professional. Whether you are 50 or 80 and play golf, tennis or another sport, we can help.

Call our office for an appointment. We will work with you to devise an exercise plan you can perform throughout the week to retain those powerful swings and serves. Tennis and golf are great ways to stay active well into your golden years. With a little attention, you can be just as competitive now as you were a decade ago.