



PROACTIVE

PHYSIOTHERAPY

THERAPEUTICS

Message

**FROM OWNER/DIRECTOR
LAURIE MCLAUGHLIN**

Spring is here and we're all eager to make the most of it by getting outside and getting active. Have you noticed that suddenly you're spotting neighbors you haven't seen for months?

Regular physical activity is one of the best things we can do for ourselves – it clears our heads, keeps us strong and actually makes us more energetic.

I don't want to dampen anyone's enthusiasm for spring time activities, but let's remember to be realistic about how we handle all this renewed energy. If the winter months have turned you into a couch potato, be sure to pace yourself when you emerge from "hibernation." You'll enjoy your activities more and be less likely to encounter strains and sprains.

In this issue, we look at how to safely enjoy your spring gardening and how to prepare yourself for trail hiking.

See you in the neighborhood!

Laurie McLaughlin
ProActive Owner/Director

FACTS ABOUT ProActive

- All of our physiotherapists have advanced training
- Our emphasis is on individualized treatment plans, tailored to your needs, goals and objectives
- ProActive offers acupuncture too – ask us about it
- We were one of the first clinics in Canada to offer Pilates exercise programs
- Our Hamilton clinic opened in 1990 and our Oakville clinic opened in 1999
- Visit us on the web at www.proactivehealth.ca

TAKE A Hike!

Hiking may look deceptively easy but if you plan to hit the trails this spring, remember that it's a sport like any other. Depending on where you hike, and for how long, it can be very physically demanding.

If you're getting back into hiking after a long period of inactivity, approach it as you would any other physical exertion – with a readiness program to prepare yourself for the endurance you'll need.

Regular cardiovascular exercise should be a key part of any exercise program to prepare yourself for hiking season. This may be brisk walking, cycling, stair climbing or any other sport that sustains a higher heart rate and therefore builds endurance.

One of the physical challenges of hiking is balance, especially when you're traversing a steep or uneven terrain strewn with rocks. Here's a physiotherapy trick that will help to improve your balance:

Stand on one leg and close your eyes. Practice this until you can steadily hold the pose for 30 seconds, then switch legs.

Your body's unconscious "righting" mechanism will be triggered. Perform this exercise several times a day for a couple of weeks and you will help restore your body's inner sense of balance. You can increase the difficulty of the exercise by putting a couch cushion on the floor and standing on that. The unsteadiness of the cushion mimics the uneven ground you'll be hiking on.

Immediately before a hike, take the time to stretch your muscles thoroughly. Slowly and gently stretch out all the major muscle groups, with an emphasis on your quadriceps (front of thigh), calf and hamstring (back of thigh) muscles. Hold each stretch for at least 30 seconds and don't bounce.

Above all, be realistic about what you can accomplish and don't be reluctant to pace yourself. Begin your hiking with shorter distances at a slower pace until you're ready to do that big expedition.



Balancing Exercise

MINOR Injury? If you've sustained a minor injury, you may wonder how best to treat it. Remember this little rhyme: *ice is nice*. Wrap a full package of frozen vegetables in a towel and apply to the injured area for 15-minute intervals.



A Passion FOR GARDENING

Is it gardening season yet? That's the question on many people's minds as spring turns the gray landscape to green.

Lifestyle surveys indicate that gardening is a favorite pastime across North America – especially for people over 55. In fact, one market research report from the U.S.-based Home & Garden Television suggests that many people would rather work in their gardens than have sex!

While gardening is a popular household activity, it is also one that can leave enthusiasts with very sore muscles and joints. Gripping garden tools can aggravate arthritic hands, while bending and digging can result in a sore back.

Here are some tips to keep you comfortable in the garden this season:

- Do some warm-ups, such as gentle stretching, to increase your blood circulation before you begin
- Avoid day-long marathons – work in one to two hour time blocks
- Be aware of your posture while working, and change positions frequently
- Kneel instead of bending at the waist
- Perform all planting and weeding directly in front of you – don't twist and reach
- Use tools with padded handles to reduce joint stress
- Wear gloves to avoid blisters
- Think twice about getting up on an extension ladder to prune trees or trim climbing plants. You'd be shocked to learn how many serious injuries stem from people falling off ladders.

If you strain your muscles while gardening, call us at ProActive – there are a number of therapies available to alleviate your discomfort.



Briefcase Blues

In our last issue we included an article about how carrying a briefcase that's too heavy can cause significant strain to the neck and shoulder area.

Here's another tip about briefcases: don't ever put them on the back seat of the car while traveling. If you have to stop suddenly, that briefcase can fly forward and cause you, or your passenger, a major neck injury. Keep briefcases on the floor of the car, behind the seats or, even better, in the trunk.

DID YOU know? The American Institute of Cancer Research (AICR) says daily exercise can help prevent some types of cancer. The AICR recommends one hour per day of moderate activity like brisk walking or gardening, plus at least one hour per week of vigorous activity like brisk hiking/hill climbing, swimming, playing tennis or dancing (three times per week for 20 minutes).

News from ProActive

CONGRATULATIONS SHELLEY

Shelley Maher, our registered massage therapist (RMT), delivered a healthy baby boy on February 17 and is currently enjoying her maternity leave. Filling in for Shelley is Matt Hustler, an RMT who is also a part-time kinesiologist at our Oakville clinic. Matt is providing massage services at both Hamilton and Oakville.

WATCH OUR WEB SITE

Our clinic web site, www.proactivehealth.ca, is about to undergo some "renovation." Check out our site for additional information about ProActive.

SIGN OF THE TIMES

Our Hamilton clinic is due to get some new signage. Watch the big "Kelsey's" sign on Main Street West in the CHML plaza parking lot for our new corporate sign.



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