

[UK CONNECTIONS]

Don't slack on winter fitness

By Kelly Eversole

It's common for people, even those who have been able to maintain a regular routine all year, to let their fitness efforts slack in the winter months.

When winter rolls around, the combination of cold weather, dark evenings and holiday commitments leads people to devote less time to exercise. Additionally, some regular exercis-

ers may feel "burned out" from their efforts to maintain a steady workout

schedule throughout the summer and fall.

As hard as it may be, it is important to maintain some level of fitness when the weather turns cold. Not being consistently active is harmful, because the muscles become weak and/or tight during periods of inactivity. When people try to resume activities in the spring at their previous level instead of easing back into the routine, they may end up injured.

To make staying active year round easier, keep some of these tips in mind:

Vary your fitness routine. Plan on doing several different types of exercise each week, and change up your plan every few months. This helps you avoid boredom and allows your muscles to be worked in a variety of ways, which helps prevent over-use injuries.

Take it inside/outside. If you primarily get your exercise from outdoor activities such as running or cycling outside, consider some indoor alternatives. Many gyms offer month-to-month plans that can help you stay in shape during the colder months. There are also a wide variety of home workouts available for sale or rent that can be done in your living room or basement with little to no equipment.

Conversely, if you stay inside for most

of your workouts year-round, try taking your fitness routine outside during the warmer months for a change of pace.

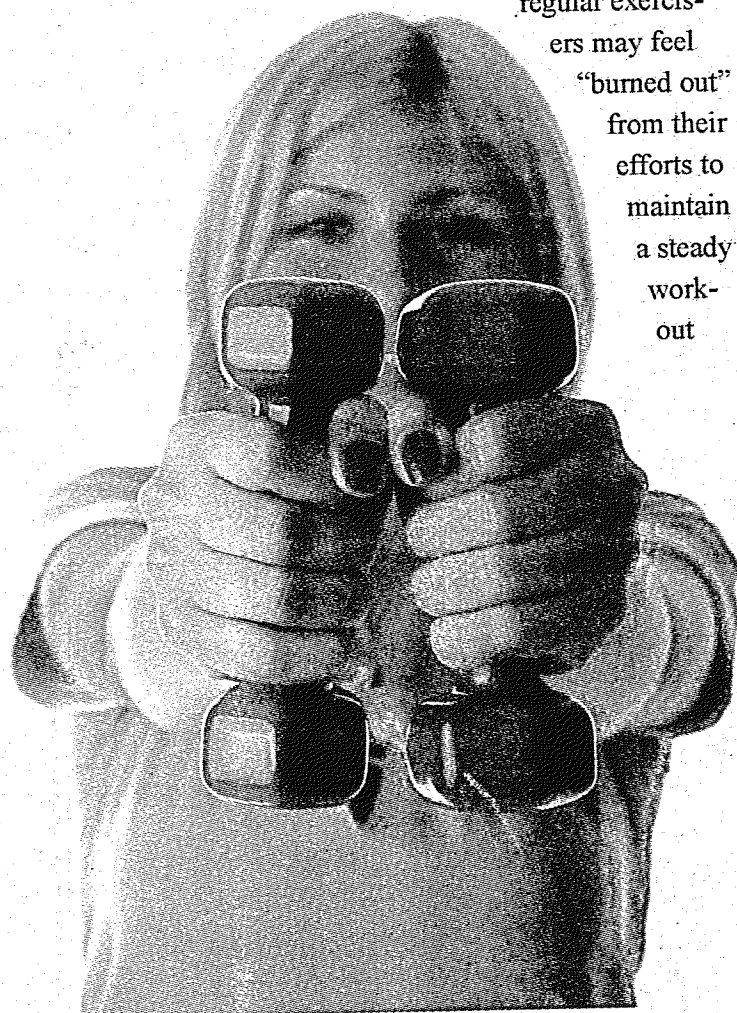
Something is better than nothing.

Even a little bit of activity is better than no activity. Some people think that because they can't go to the gym for an hour, then they may as well not work out at all. But even 20 minutes of exercise done at home is beneficial for maintaining fitness. For example, research has shown that strengthening exercises done once a week maintains strength levels until one can resume lifting more frequently.

Set attainable goals. If you're making exercise part of your New Year's Resolutions this January, remember to ease into a routine. Be realistic about where you are starting and set goals you can reach.

It takes a while to get out of shape, but it takes even longer to get back into shape, and it won't happen overnight.

Choose proper workout attire. Good shoes go a long way for preventing injuries. It is important to have shoes that support the activity you're performing. If you are unsure of the type of shoe you should use, visiting a specialty shoe store for suggestions can be helpful in choosing the correct type.



Courtesy of University of Kentucky Public Relations. Kelly Eversole is a physical therapist in the University of Kentucky Sports Physical Therapy Clinic.