Baby Boomer Sports Injury Prevention Tips

While there may be no fountain of youth, you can slow down the aging process by staying physically active. Regular exercise enhances muscle and joint function, keeps bones strong and decreases your risk of heart attack and stroke. The following tips have been developed by the American Orthopedic Society for Sports Medicine and the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons.

- **Always take time to warm up and stretch before physical activity.** Research studies have shown that cold muscles are more prone to injury. Warm up with jumping jacks, stationary cycling or by running or walking in place for 3–5 minutes. Then slowly and gently stretch, holding each stretch for 30 seconds.

- **Do not succumb to the “weekend warrior” syndrome.** Compressing your physical activity into two days sets you up for trouble and does not increase your fitness level. Try to get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day. If you are truly pressed for time, you can break it up into 10-minute segments. Remember that moderate physical activity includes things such as walking the dog, working in the garden, playing with grandkids and taking the stairs instead of the elevator.

- **Take lessons and invest in good equipment.** Whether you are a beginner or have been playing a sport for a long time, lessons are a worthwhile investment. Proper form and instruction reduce the chance of developing an overuse injury such as tendonitis or stress fractures. Lessons at varying levels of play for many sports are offered by local park districts and athletic clubs. Select the proper shoes for your sport and use them only for that sport. When the treads start to look worn or the shoes are no longer as supportive as they were, it is time to replace them.

- **Listen to your body.** As you age, you may find that you are not as flexible as you were or that you cannot tolerate the same types of activities that you did years ago. While no one is happy about getting older, you will be able to prevent injury by modifying your activity to accommodate your body’s needs.

For more information, or to contact one of our Sports Medicine Outreach Liaisons, email us at SportsMedicine@amitahealth.org or call us at 224.273.2416
• **Use the 10 percent rule.** When changing your activity level, increase it in increments of no more than 10 percent per week. If you normally walk two miles a day and want to increase your fitness level, do not try to suddenly walk four miles. Slowly build up to more miles each week until you reach your higher goal. Use the 10 percent rule as your guide for strength training as well and increase your weights gradually.

• **Develop a balanced fitness program that incorporates cardiovascular exercise, strength training and flexibility.** In addition to providing a total body workout, a balanced program will keep you from getting bored and lessen your chance of injury.

• **Add activity and new exercises cautiously.** No matter if you have been sedentary or are very fit, do not try to take on too many activities at one time. It is best to add no more than one or two new activities per workout.

If you have or have had sports or orthopedic injuries or problems such as tendonitis, arthritis, stress fractures or lower back pain in the past, consult an orthopedic surgeon who can help you design a fitness routine to promote wellness and minimize the chance of injury.