

Be careful when starting sports again for summer

By Dr. Robert Weil For the Sun May 14, 2013 8:10PM

Finally the nice weather is here (or is it?) and we're all looking forward to being outdoors and active. That's great. But remember to take it easy, especially if you have been inactive all winter. It's common to see overuse injuries increase as outdoor activities get going.

Emergency room doctors always note a spike in visits and injuries over Memorial Day weekend. I call it the Memorial Day syndrome. Often the weather is nice, good times are here and the temptation to get out and play hard is there.

Running the bases, throwing the ball, aggressive tennis or volleyball — we've all been there.

Try not to compete too hard too soon or keep up with the kids. Let's not run long distances if our body is not ready, or overuse injuries can be waiting for you.

The start of spring and summer is a great time to initiate a good walking or running program.

If you're just starting, I recommend walking for the first month or so, 15 to 20 minutes at a comfortable pace three or four days a week.

Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothes and most importantly, get yourself a good pair of walking or running shoes. It is still very common to see people with the wrong shoes for their foot type, or just using shoes that are worn out. If your shoes are pushing a year old, treat yourself to new ones and make sure you are fit properly.

New Balance Naperville, Naperville Running Co. and Dick Pond Athletics are places that you can count on to get the proper shoe for your foot type with the right fit. Whether you're a newcomer or champion, you can be sure that they can help you.

If after a month or so of successful problem-free walking, you want to start running, great. Learning some proper warm-up exercises as well as cool down is important.

If tennis or golf is your game, again, ease into action, warm up properly and wear good shoes. If there is a history of foot or lower extremity problems or past running-related injuries then getting a foot mechanics evaluation or screening is important. Free evaluations are available by appointment at my office.

The Sports Doctor article January 2009, "In sports it all starts with the feet" talks about many common foot-related problems. Other past articles talk about shin splints, runner's knee, arch and heel problems and orthotics. Just go to Sportsdoctorradio.com and click on newspaper articles. It's a great time to get active. Just don't overdo it.

Dr. Robert Weil is a sports podiatrist from Naperville with an office in Aurora. You can hear him on his weekly radio show at 6:30 p.m. Thursdays on 90.9-FM. Contact him at drweilsportsdoctor@yahoo.com and visit his website at Sportsdoctorradio.com.