

# Listen to your body when you don't feel well

Cold and flu season is underway and many people wonder if they should work out when they are sick.

I often tell people to listen to their bodies. If you are feeling unwell it is your body's way of telling you something is wrong. Most people welcome the "get out of workout card," but there are some people who are tempted not to break their fitness routine for fear of losing the results of all their hard work.

I remind them that working out may actually prolong their illness.

I believe it is a myth that you can "sweat out germs." However, a walk may be beneficial by increasing your endorphins and helping you feel better. An intense workout is not recommended.

A great way to help you determine whether you should or shouldn't work out is to follow this rule. If your illness is above your neck, it is OK, but if it is below the neck, it isn't. So if you simply have a case of the sniffles, it is probably OK to continue with your program.

If you have a fever, I recommend you don't work out. Having a fever puts too much stress on the heart, which is already beating faster because of your higher than normal body temperature. The same holds true if you're suffering from chest



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fitness bootcamp

congestion, coughing, shortness of breath, nausea or stomach discomfort.

If you just have a cold and decide to go to the gym, keep in mind that you can easily spread your illness to others at the gym, so be considerate and wipe down the equipment and weights you use.

If you feel up to doing exercise, you have the option of staying at home instead of going to the gym. Also, reduce the intensity of your regular workout. It is usually safe to do light aerobic exercise. Think fitness maintenance — it is not the time to work on increasing your level of fitness. With weight training, keep the intensity low and go for light resistance.

It may also be better to stay indoors, where the air is warmer and more humid. The cold and dry air outside can trigger the airway and cause excessive coughing.

If you are getting back to your workout after a flu bug, don't start

until all symptoms are gone. Don't start back at the level you were working out before getting sick. No matter how in shape you are, always start back slowly. Muscle has memory and you will be back at the fitness level you had prior to your illness in no time.

From my experience, a head cold doesn't keep me from working out, but any kind of cough or chest cold has me taking time off.

Most times, a low- to moderate-intensity workout can really loosen up a head cold, whereas this same workout done with a chest cold can really set you back and make you feel worse. As a trainer, I have had clients come to a session feeling unwell.

I follow the "Are you sick above or below the neck" rule, and sometimes wind up sending them home.

A little common sense and self-awareness goes a long way.

When in doubt, take the day off.

Missing a few exercise sessions is not going to affect your overall fitness. Sometimes it's best to give your body a few days to heal and then you can come back stronger than ever.

Guelph-based personal trainer Marla Arndt owns and operates Frameworks Fitness Studio. She can be reached via her website at [www.frameworksfitness.com](http://www.frameworksfitness.com). Her column appears every other week.



Working out when you are sick isn't always a good idea.

# Teach kids early on the importance of fitness

The local in motion organization reports that obesity and inactivity are such prevalent problems, and so deeply entrenched, that children may not live as long as their parents.

A recent report issued from the organization states that 31 per cent of folks in Dufferin County and 40 per cent in Guelph and Wellington County are inactive.

The same group reports 54 per cent of males and 44 per cent of females in the region are overweight or obese.

Obviously this is troubling and the very reason the folks at the Advanced Foods and Materials Network conceived the idea of the Wellness Initiative in the first place.

Overweight and inactive people are more prone to diseases such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease and breathing difficulties.

Because of their poor health and diets, they are also more likely to experience depression.

I think of depression as the great Catch-22 of health. The less active, the more prone to depression. The more you are affected by depression, the harder it is to pay attention to diet and exercise. Yet exercise and proper diet have been shown to improve depression.

So what to do?

The in motion website has information about fitness, an interactive quiz where you can test your own fitness, and links to sports and fitness organizations in the city. They also have information about fitness activities for your children.

I never played team sports as a kid.

## OH WELL

Joanne Shuttleworth's  
exploration of personal wellness

The Mercury's Joanne Shuttleworth is making a one-year exploration of the subject of wellness — in connection with a community project called the Guelph Wellness Initiative. Follow her study of what goes into wellness beyond such things as fitness and health in Oh Well, a blogging and reporting exercise, playing out in the Guelph Mercury and at [GuelphMercury.com](http://GuelphMercury.com). You can also reach her at [jshuttleworth@guelphmercury.com](mailto:jshuttleworth@guelphmercury.com)

As a result I throw like a girl, I stop skating by ramming into the boards and I have to schedule fitness into my life.

It doesn't come naturally.

I signed my kids up for sports when they were little so physical fitness would become routine and regular for them — much like brushing their teeth and making their beds. I didn't want them to struggle with 10 or 15... or 20 extra pounds all their lives the way I have.

So far so good.

It's expensive to sign kids up for sports though, and takes commitment from parents who have to shuttle their kids around.

Somewhere along the line you have to balance the stress that team sports can put on

your own life with the benefits of sports exposure for your kids.

If you're getting stymied in your fitness journey, or bored with the same-old, same-old, check out [www.wdginmotion.ca](http://www.wdginmotion.ca) for inexpensive and different ideas.

### EARLY TO BED... I'M SEEING THE LIGHT

I've got to stop falling asleep on the couch in the evening.

I've been nursing a sore neck all week — the result, I'm sure, of this habit I've developed of having a two-hour nap before going to bed.

I stretch out to watch a television show and wake at 1 or 2 in the morning, my body contorted and the TV still on.

Then I bumble my way to bed, only to lie wide awake for an hour, now unable to sleep.

Word on the street is this 'sleeping sickness' is going around.

I'm sure it's got to do with fewer hours of daylight and, of course, the time change a few weeks ago.

Suddenly it's dark at 5 p.m. It's enough to draw out the inner hibernator in me.

If you've got little kids in your house, they've probably adjusted to the new clock by now.

But I'll bet it was chaos for the first day or two. I know for a fact that parents of little kids did not spend their extra hour sleeping in on Time Change Day.

I always dreaded changing the clocks — not just because I had to consult manuals to

change the clocks on electronic equipment but because I knew it would disrupt my kids' sleep schedule.

I learned early on never to wake a sleeping baby, and to change the clocks amounts to the same.

My stiff neck has convinced me to go to bed earlier and try not let the couch get its springs on me.

The good news is that while the weather will continue to get colder, after Dec. 23 the days start to get longer. By mid-February, it's quite noticeable.

### IF THE WALLS COULD TALK...

There's a lot of history in my 60-year-old house, but I have realized it's predicting my future if I don't watch my ways.

The creaking floors mimicked — dare I say mocked — my clicking joints as I stretched and lunged and got myself moving this morning.

Old injuries will always need some extra limbering but I don't think they have to scream about it.

The house has good bones, but without the proper support and foundation, it will sag in the middle, it told me as I did a set of crunches. I did a second set.

Paint and lipstick are all well and good but you have to take care of the infrastructure of a house.

Nobody needs a wheezy furnace or clogged plumbing.

So, too, must I take care of myself.

**Christmas**  
STORY CONTEST

The Guelph Mercury is seeking entries for its third annual Christmas-Holiday season story contest.

The submissions can be true stories or original works of fiction. Prizes will be awarded to three entries selected for publication at or in advance of the December 24 edition of the Guelph Mercury. Additional submissions may be printed and all entries are eligible to be published.

Submit your entry by **December 10, 2009**  
**Email:** [editor@guelphmercury.com](mailto:editor@guelphmercury.com)  
**Fax:** 519-767-1681  
**Mail:** Christmas Story Contest  
 8-14 Macdonell St., Guelph, ON N1H 6P7

Submissions are to be no longer than 900 words. Entries may be e-mailed, faxed, mailed or dropped off at the Guelph Mercury. Please mark entries as Christmas Story Contest and include your contact information with entries. Do not include supporting items such as photographs with entries.

**Guelph Mercury**