

# Sports Wellness Programs

Is 40 really the new 20? *By Robin O'Connor*

**WE WOULD ALL LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT 40 IS THE NEW 20**, but as we age the natural wear and tear on our bodies can take a toll on our joints, flexibility and muscle strength. Aging healthily can sometimes feel like a full-time job, but maintaining core body strength and remaining physically active make growing older less painful.

Remaining physically active has a multitude of benefits. It can intensify blood flow to the brain, strengthen your heart, but it can also increase the chances of injury. Most of us lead a sedentary life during the week and on the weekends we take to the streets and greens to participate in our activity of choice. Our bodies are not equipped to handle intense sports one or two days a week. Muscle strains, back pain, and joint tenderness are common ailments of the uncondi-

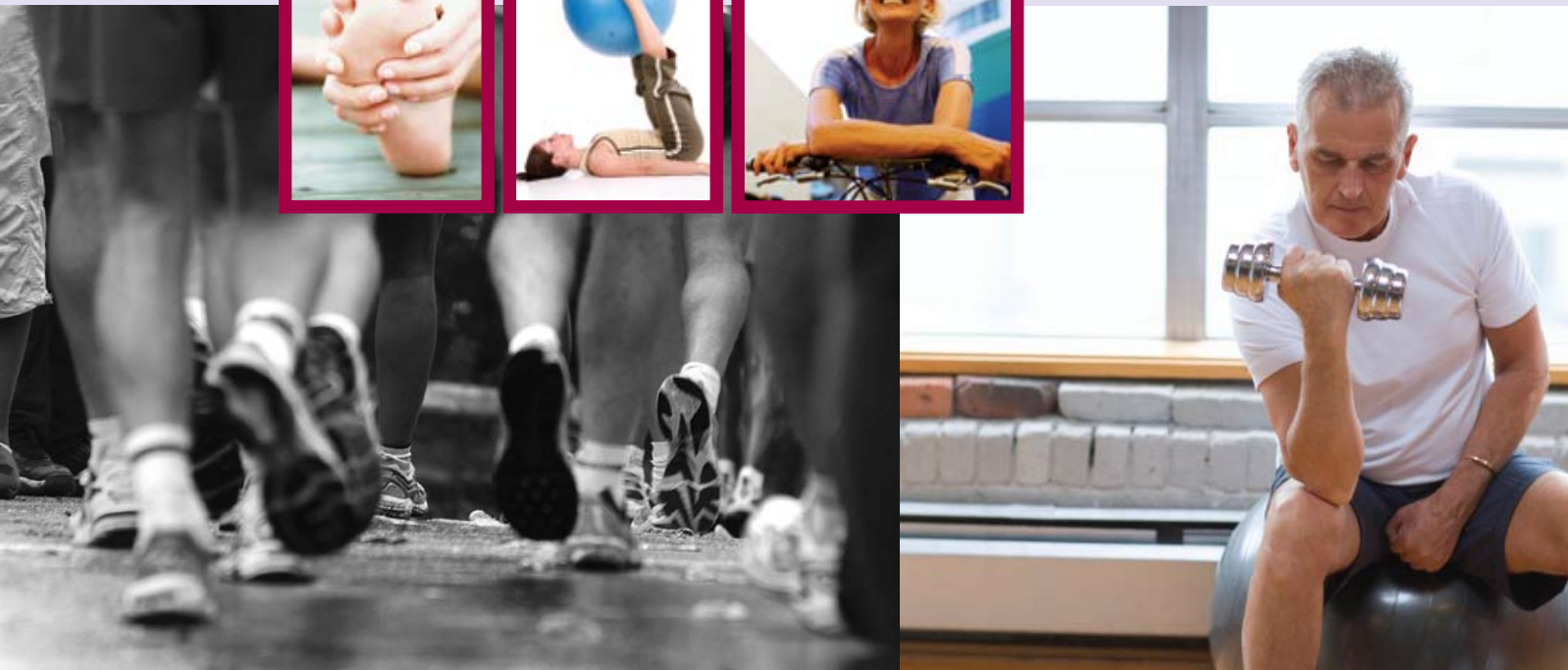
tioned body, especially as we age. Sports wellness programs are designed to prepare and train our bodies to sustain these types of activity.

Siofra Rice, a physical therapist and supervisor at California Pacific's Outpatient Physical Rehabilitation team noticed an increasing number of physical therapy referrals for sports related conditions that could have been prevented. Siofra says, "It seemed like every day more and more 'weekend warriors' were coming in with preventable injuries. This is often the result of poor bike mechanics or poor conditioning for marathon training. I thought there must be a better way to help prevent these injuries before they happen."

Physical therapist Jessica Johnson sees many golfers in her conditioning

class. One of her patients had been a longtime golfer and had developed a number of orthopedic injuries. Both of his knees had been replaced, he had his rotator cuff repaired and he suffered from lower back pain. Just like many of Jessica's patients, he had never really done any body preparation for playing golf. After a private evaluation and prescribed regimen that he follows, he has less pain after golfing and improved scores. His regiment has been so successful that he has returned for more instruction from Jessica, his physical therapist.

The Sports Wellness program was designed for everyday people that enjoy activities like golf and bicycling. Siofra explains, "It is so important to remain physically active, our goal is to prevent injury and make the experience more enjoyable so you can keep doing what you enjoy as long as you would like."



Physical therapists understand how the muscles work to keep the joints and tendons healthy. Together with your physical therapist you can train your body to reduce the risk of injury.

Siofra and her team of physical therapy experts first launched a Pilates program to address the needs of athletes at all levels and all ages. Pilates has many benefits including core muscle strengthening, spinal alignment, improved mental clarity, and better flexibility and balance. The Pilates classes were a success with both patients recovering from an injury and those who wanted to prevent an injury. Siofra was asked to explore other sports wellness programs with a goal of keeping adults physically strong and injury free. In addition to the Pilates Beyond Therapy program, California Pacific is now offering Fit To Ride, bike-fit services, Fit for Life, an exercise program for the over 60s crowd, the Running Clinic, the Golf Conditioning Program and the Ski Conditioning Program.

If you're a weekend warrior, want to prevent an injury, are over 60 and want to improve your fitness, or you would like to continue your activity of choice while reducing your risk of injury, please see our Sports Wellness Program schedule in this issue of Beyond Medicine page 31, or call the California Pacific Outpatient Physical Therapy Department at 415-600-5860 for more information. Remember injury prevention is the key to lifelong physical activity.

# Aortic Aneurysms

Surgery Without Scars *By Rob Seide*

**FRANK MATTEI KNEW FOUR YEARS AGO HE HAD AN** aortic aneurysm, and that one day it would be large enough to require surgery. What he didn't realize was that the endovascular surgery would be so simple. "The procedure lasted only two or three hours and I was back home in a day and a half!" says the 73-year-old San Francisco resident.

An aortic aneurysm is a bulge in a section of the aorta, the body's main artery which carries blood from the heart to the rest of the body. Because the section with the aneurysm is overstretched and weak, it can burst, possibly causing serious bleeding, that can lead to death.

While aneurysms can form in any section of the aorta, they are most common in the belly area—called an abdominal aortic aneurysm—or in the upper body, called a thoracic aortic aneurysm.

Advanced treatment of aortic aneurysms being done at California Pacific Medical Center involves minimally invasive surgery, allowing patients like Frank to return home after two days, often without making any incisions. (Usually, a tiny puncture wound is made in the groin for this microscopic procedure.)

"Advances in our minimally invasive technique means a patient

no longer has a large abdominal scar," says Daniel Nathanson, M.D., endovascular surgery director at the Vascular Institute at California Pacific Medical Center. "Using traditional surgery to repair aortic aneurysms, patients used to spend three days in intensive care and nine days in an extensive recovery period. With our minimally invasive technique, the patient is eating a regular diet immediately after the surgery, is walking the day after surgery and back to a completely normal routine within a week."

The two biggest risk factors for getting an aortic aneurysm are having a family history and smoking. Therefore, while there is no real prevention for the disease, it significantly helps if you lead a healthy lifestyle:

- Control blood pressure
- Stop smoking
- Maintain a healthy diet low in saturated fats
- Participate in regular aerobic exercise

Sure enough, Frank's brother had an aortic aneurysm and, long ago, he was a smoker. Frank has made some lifestyle changes, "I don't smoke, don't drink and my diet is well regulated. I eat lots of vegetables and fruit. Of course it's also important that I've had a loving wife for 33 years to help keep me on track!"