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## Don't Snooze So You Don't Lose

This time last year, I was writing to give you last-minute tips and encouragement for the upcoming River Bank Run. That will have to wait a few months, but I still want to urge you to keep on training and exercising and trying to maintain as normal a lifestyle as possible.

Let's be honest. Most of us are not living our typical lives because of the COVID-19 crisis. There are many facets of our lives that have been severely altered. You may have concerns about your job, worries about paying bills, changes in sleep and diet, increases in stress, differences in mood and alterations in exercise, to name a few. Many athletes tell me they are not exercising the way they want to or as hard as they typically would. Some have completely lost their motivation to exercise. This is understandable. Many things are out of our individual control, but there also are many that we can control. Exercise is one of them.

If you are among those with an altered exercise routine, know that it is important to set aside time for any form of exercise because it will benefit both your physical and mental health. We discussed in a [previous article](#) the importance of exercise and its effects on the body. Exercise, even in simple forms, improves your infection-fighting immune system, blood pressure and cardiovascular health; decreases stress, enhances sleep and helps with weight control. From running or walking, to biking, free weights, yoga and streamed online exercise videos, any form of exercise is beneficial. It will require discipline to stick with a program, but in the long run you will be glad that you did.

Not to be the bearer of more bad news (you probably don't need more in your life right now), but if you are not exercising, you will have likely lost the conditioning and benefits of training that you were working toward. Deconditioning happens quickly. For example, have you ever noticed that resuming your workouts was really difficult after you skipped them during a week-long vacation? There is a physiologic reason for this. Research studies have shown that a lack of exercise for a period of 10 days to two weeks can lead to significant deconditioning, which affects the cardiovascular and muscular system. This applies to both recreational and elite athletes.

Bottom line: If you want to maintain conditioning, keep exercising.

Now we need to discuss how to get back into your training program. First off, unfortunately it won't be easy. It may take weeks to months to build up your conditioning and return to your normal routines. It always takes longer to build something up than to break it down. This will require dedication, but there is no reason you can't get back on track. Another important recommendation is to take it slowly. You may be prone to injury and overuse syndromes if you rush back into training. The last thing you need at this point is an injury. Listen to your body and don't push too hard.

This is a difficult time, but we will weather this storm, resume some sense of normalcy and run the River Bank Run on October 24.

I am usually unable to run the River Bank Run on the second Saturday of May because I'm providing medical coverage at the finish line. But this year, I am excited to run on May 9. I

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hope that you have continued training and will be running your own virtual River Bank Run as well. Your course may not be in downtown Grand Rapids, you will not have the crowds cheering you on and the finish line may not be on Ottawa Avenue, but I hope that the spirit of the River Bank Run will still be present on Saturday in Grand Rapids, in Michigan and across the country.

We are currently seeing athletes and addressing their injuries, both in clinic and through virtual visits, so if you have any questions or concerns regarding an injury or pain, please reach out to one of our experienced sports medicine physicians at Corewell Health Medical Group Orthopedics at (616) 267-8860. You can also find more information about our orthopedic program and providers on our [website](#).

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