

## SENIOR SCAPE: Warm-up is crucial

By Sylvia Dickens

Before any exercise, it's important to warm up. Otherwise, you can injure yourself, even doing some of the "easy" activities. When you sit, your muscles contract and, over time, will actually shrink. The longer you sit, the more comfortable they get in that contracted position.

Suddenly getting up and taking on an activity can put quite a strain on them. Imagine an elastic band. At ease, it goes limp and useless. When you pull it, the elastic tightens under the strain.

Your muscles work similarly, but if you don't ease into the exercise, you can pull a muscle and make it snap. And since muscles are attached to bone, you can cause other injuries as well. Not to mention the heart muscle, which needs to be prepared to take on a new or unexpected challenge. That's how some people get heart attacks. The heart has not been properly prepared for the unexpected strain.

Always warm up, even if all you are doing is walking. You've probably seen runners and other sport enthusiasts do a series of stretching exercises. There's a good reason.

Fortunately, there are stretching exercises you can do that don't cost you a dime. Stand with your feet slightly apart and bend down as far as you can to touch your toes, or your knees. This stretches the calf, back of legs and back muscles. Doing several of these also gets your heart pumping in preparation for your activity.

Reach up over your head and lean left and then right to stretch those side muscles and arm muscles. This will also help your cardiovascular system. Raise and lower each arm up over your head to get oxygen and blood to your shoulders to help prevent injuring them. Repeat these exercises 10 times each and you're ready to go.

See, it doesn't take much, but these exercises can be the deciding factor in whether or not you hurt yourself as you go about your daily routine.

If you need more formal instruction in how to exercise properly, the Aurora Seniors' Centre offers a number of programs that do cost. These include Chair Fitness, Chair Stretch, Stretch and Tone and, of course, there's always swimming. The act of swimming is not only a good warm up, but it's also good exercise.

The great things about swimming are that you can go at your own pace, it's non-weight bearing, and it exercises all parts of your body: the heart, muscles and lungs that are so important to keep in good shape. This makes it an ideal exercise for seniors and those with body weight, arthritis and joint issues.

### Agawa Canyon Tour

Once again the Centre is offering the Agawa Canyon five-day tour. No doubt the tickets will sell fast, so don't wait. The trip is scheduled for September 21 to 25 which includes a trip along the Niagara Escarpment to the Bruce Peninsula and Tobermory, a quaint harbor town.

On day two you'll take the Chi-Cheemaun Ferry to the Assinack Museum on Manitoulin Island. Day three is the highlight: breakfast aboard the train as you travel the Agawa Canyon with its vibrant Autumn colors. You'll even have time to stroll the base of the canyon, enjoy a picnic lunch or take in the breathtaking vistas and landscapes. The day will end with dinner at the hotel. Next, you'll explore the Canadian Bush Plane Heritage Museum and the Ermatinger-Clergue National Historic Site in Sudbury before heading home. On the way, you'll stop at Dynamic Earth and Science North. You can get more information and purchase tickets at the Centre's reception desk.

### Ease arthritis with diet

Did you know that there are certain foods that can actually trigger an arthritis flair up? Here are five that you should avoid: Anything with gluten such as bagels, white bread and pasta; processed foods including French fries, soybean and flour; grilled and barbecued dishes; and sugar.

Also important to avoid are potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant, peppers and tobacco as they actually can worsen arthritis because of the way they affect calcium metabolism in the body. This could lead to calcium deposits in tendons, ligaments, cartilage and joints contributing to inflammation and joint pain. This effect can be worse for people who already have arthritis. Substances in these

products can cause the worsening of an already existing inflammation.

For more information on the Aurora Seniors' Centre, drop by 90 John West Way, visit [www.auroraseniors.ca](http://www.auroraseniors.ca), email [auroraseniors@rogers.com](mailto:auroraseniors@rogers.com) or call 905-726-4767 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday to Friday.