



Gentlemen...Start...Your Engines!

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The days are getting shorter and that means it's also going to start getting a lot colder. These weather changes remind me that one of these days I'll have to resume the all too common morning ritual of starting my car. My car is by no means new and every winter it takes a few minutes for me to really get the heater pumping and all the ice scraped off. If I didn't do this, I would either freeze before I made it to my destination or cause a multiple car pileup. Obviously, neither is good.

I like to think of our bodies in much the same way. Before we begin any type of moderate or vigorous physical activity, it is definitely in the best interest of our body to perform a 5-10 minute warm up.

Our warm up should do two things. The first is to promote blood flow to our muscles. During physical activity, the percent of blood that reaches our muscles increases from around 20% at rest to about 80% when we are exercising. This blood brings oxygen and other nutrients to the muscles and then carries muscular waste and byproducts away from the muscles. Needless to say, this shift in blood flow is extremely important to proper muscle function. An easy way to accomplish this is by moving around. Movement as simple as a brisk walk will get the blood flowing properly.

The second purpose of a warm up is to actively lengthen muscles that may have become tight throughout the day due to lack of movement. Lengthening these muscles will promote proper body mechanics and put you at a decreased risk to create muscular imbalances. Below are a few examples of warm up activities that you can perform with relative ease.

