

KAYAKING –

Great fun and a great work-out!

With the warmer weather and lighter nights comes an increase in the activity on our local rivers. You may have spotted the occasional colourful kayak on the river, particularly in the vicinity of the Leam Boat Centre in Jephsons Gardens.

If you were in the park a few weeks ago when they had their annual demo day you would have seen boats of all sizes. Long elegant touring boats that seem to glide effortlessly through the water, and stumpy play boats performing amazing acrobatics.

If you have never tried kayaking before I would thoroughly recommend it as a lovely way to spend your leisure time and a great all body work out.

If you are already an experienced paddler are you getting the most out of this great activity by preparing well before taking to the water?

You obviously don't need to be super fit to gently paddle a boat on flat water but to cover a greater distance and achieve a satisfying speed will demand upper body strength and stamina. The legs also contribute a lot of power during paddling but are at risk of becoming stiff due to the static position. As with all sports it is worth doing a little preparation to improve your performance and therefore your pleasure, at the same time reducing the risks of injury and post activity aches and pains.

For anybody, swimming is an excellent cardio vascular exercise, using your whole body without impact on the joints. For the paddler swimming is not only an effective way of strengthening the shoulder muscles, but is obviously a useful skill.

A strong paddle stroke does not come from arm strength alone but requires controlled trunk rotation. Diagonal crunches (lying on your back with hands on head, take elbow to opposite knee) are good exercises to include in training for paddling as these strengthen the abdominal muscles that produce trunk rotation.

Before actually getting on the water a gentle warm up will help prepare your body for the activity, a brisk walk or gentle jog sufficient to increase your heart rate would do the job. Follow this with some careful stretches to maximize your flexibility in the boat.

Whilst getting settled into your kayak you can continue your stretches. Holding your paddle in both hands rotate your body so the paddle lies along side the boat, repeat this on the other side.

When back on dry land a gentle walk to loosen your legs will feel good, followed by some stretches particularly for your hips.

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