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## Meet our Therapist

Kim Saunders, PT, MSPT (Fort Collins)



Kimberly Saunders, PT moved to Fort Collins in 1999 after graduating with a Master's degree in Physical Therapy from Washington University in St. Louis. Growing up in Central Illinois and earning her Bachelor's Degree at Southern Illinois, she appreciates everything the Front Range has to offer and has been delighted to practice Physical Therapy in Fort Collins since 2000. Kim received certification as a Pilates Instructor in 2003. Currently she is working on a Certificate of Achievement in Pregnancy-Postpartum Physical Therapy as well as pursuing a Doctorate in PT from Washington University.

Kim specializes in correcting Movement System Impairment Syndromes that cause pain, limit function, or decrease athletic performance. She has experience with a variety of manual therapy

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A physical therapist plays an important role in the recovery process following most injuries. It's important to remember that women in particular experience a higher risk from bone-related injuries after menopause. In this newsletter, we try to dispel some of the most commonly-held myths about post injury exercise regimes, so that the mothers (and everyone else) in your family are aware of the do's and don'ts of post injury exercise.

### Myth #1: After an injury, "Bed rest is the best".

**Fact:** A short period of bed rest (1 to 2 days) can help prevent further injury during the acute phase, but longer rest intervals can be counterproductive. In fact, resting and inactivity can actually cause more pain since a lack of activity leads to reduced blood flow and even muscle weakness. This, in turn, creates more pain and triggers an unhealthy cycle of pain and inactivity that feed each other and aggravate the situation. Always start with low intensity exercises (your physical therapist will point you in the right direction) and ease into an exercise regime that progressively strengthens your muscles and improves flexibility of your joints.



### Myth #2: Going to the gym is the best way to regain your strength.

**Fact:** It's common for people to reinjure themselves if they return to the gym or engage in 'unsupervised exercise' too soon after an injury. Trust the expertise of the physical therapist and complete an exercise protocol before progressing to independent, unsupervised exercise.

### Myth #3: With any exercise, if there is no pain, there is no gain.

**Fact:** When you first start an exercise plan, you'll be using your muscles in new ways that may cause soreness the next day, but anything more than a little discomfort isn't healthy. Contrary to popular belief, exercise doesn't have to hurt to be effective. Pain is your body's way of telling you that something's wrong – if you want to avoid serious injury, listen to your body and back off at the first sign of pain.

### Myth #4: Focusing on specific muscles (abs, arms, thighs) is the best way to recover after an injury.

**Fact:** The energy expenditure (amount of calories burnt) increases as you involve more muscle groups and increase the intensity of exercise. As healing continues, your physical therapist may recommend exercises like walking which involve several large muscle groups as opposed to single muscle group movements.

## Exercise Techniques To Prevent Injuries

Your physical therapist can provide you with specific guidelines for injury free exercise, but here are a few tips:

- 1 Dress appropriately.** Replace worn-out shoes and wear the right clothing while exercising. This will reduce the rough impact on your joints and allow you to stay comfortable.
  - 2 Warm up and stretch.** You should always start off with warm-up exercises, like walking on the spot for several minutes. Gentle stretching exercises after your warm up allow your muscles to get 'primed' for exercise.
  - 3 Don't forget to breathe!** Deep, regular breathing can keep your heart rate steady and help maintain proper oxygen flow to your muscles. Never hold your breath while exercising. Your physical therapist will advise you when to breathe in and out while exercising.
  - 4 Technique and range of motion:** Your physical therapist will teach you the correct technique, range of motion and speed to help you get the maximum benefit from each exercise.
  - 5 Cool down.** At the end of your workout, decrease the intensity of your movements for at least 5 minutes, allowing your heart rate to return to normal.
- Feel free to call our clinic to find out how you can keep your body healthy and prevent injuries.



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## Heel Pain and What To Do About It..

Plantar fasciitis is one of the most common causes of heel pain. It is an irritation or inflammation of the plantar fascia – the structure that runs from the heel to the ball of the foot. This is a strong, dense strip of tissue that supports the arch of the foot, almost like the string on an archer's bow.

When the foot is on the ground, the full weight of the body is concentrated on the plantar fascia, forcing it to stretch as the arch of the foot flattens from the full weight of the body. In the example of the archer's bow, if the bow is trying to straighten, picture the string being forced to stretch.

This leads to stress on the plantar fascia where it attaches to the heel bone. This may lead to small tears of the fascia. These tears are usually repaired by the body, but repetitive stress may result in incomplete healing. A bone spur can result as the body tries to compensate for too much stress.

techniques, custom foot orthotics, balance training, geriatrics, and the care of runners and cyclists in addition to her special training in Pilates and peri-partum care. Focusing on the whole person, Kim strives to help each individual better understand their body. She enjoys helping people of all ages and all ability levels reach their goals.

A former collegiate runner and marathon finisher, Kim focuses more on family time with her husband and two small children than competition these days. Yet, she still makes time to enjoy the outdoors by hiking, biking, camping and occasionally running.

If you want to receive this monthly newsletter by e-mail, please let us know by calling (970) 667-7755 or e-mail [foothillsandraypt@gmail.com](mailto:foothillsandraypt@gmail.com).

**As a patient, you always have the choice of where to go for your Physical Therapy treatment. Most insurances allow you to refer yourself. Make sure that you always see a Licensed Therapist, because not all clinics are the same. We welcome the opportunity to be the clinic of choice for you, your family, friends.**



## If Your First Steps Are Painful...

Pain in the heel can occur due to inflammation of the plantar fascia (known as plantar fasciitis), strain of the intrinsic muscles of the foot, or impingement of the small nerves in the foot.

Symptoms of plantar fasciitis include pain on or around the heel when weight is placed on the foot. This is usually worst in the morning, especially with the first few steps after getting out of bed. In most cases, there is no pain at night since the fascia tightens up overnight. Morning motion causes pulling of the fascia and results in pain that can be described as sharp, burning or stabbing. Pain usually reduces during the course of the day as the tissue warms up. Prolonged standing, walking or getting up after long periods of sitting usually irritate the fascia.



Common causes of heel pain include:

- Excessive running or jumping
- Overload of physical activity (especially for athletes)
- Changes in physical activity, footwear, or exercise surface
- High arches, flat feet, abnormal gait
- Wearing improper shoes while walking or running
- Diabetes contributes to heel pain in the elderly
  - Recent weight gain or pregnancy

## Taking The Right Steps To Relieve Heel Pain

In most cases, plantar fasciitis does not require surgery and can be treated conservatively. However, every individual heals at a different pace.

If you suffer from heel pain, the first thing you need to do is determine the cause. For example, you may need to replace your old, worn out shoes. You may need to rest if there has been a significant increase in your activity levels.

The next thing to do is to call your physical therapist. You may even need to see a doctor or podiatrist. Your doctor may prescribe anti-inflammatory medications and physical therapy to help you reduce pain and inflammation and resume daily activities without pain. In some cases, your doctor may give you a cortisone shot to address excessive inflammation.

Most people with heel pain get better with physical therapy. Therapy usually includes stretching the calf muscles (on the back of the lower leg) to take the tension off the plantar fascia. If your calf is really tight, the doctor may order a night splint (to be worn while you sleep at night). This will place a mild stretch on the calf muscles and the plantar fascia. This helps reduce morning pain. Our physical therapists will also look carefully at the rest of your body for imbalances that may increase stress or strain in the foot.

**Patients with plantar fasciitis are commonly prescribed physical therapy. Our therapists design exercises to improve flexibility in the calf muscles and the plantar fascia.** Treatment helps control pain and swelling. We may use ultrasound, electrical stimulation, ice packs and soft-tissue massage to help you recover as fast as possible. We may also prescribe exercises to address any imbalances we found elsewhere in the body. We may even recommend the use of an orthotic depending on the anatomy of your foot.



Call our office today, and we'll help you take the right steps without pain!

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