

Most Common Injuries in Sports

- How to Prevent and Treat Minor Injuries

Participating in sports, you know there is a good possibility, you are gonna get injured. Avoiding injury at all cost would be ideal, if it were possible. It is more likely that at several points in an athlete's career, they will inevitably find themselves sidelined because of injury. The Department of Health and Human Services reports that there are an estimated 8.6 million sports injuries each year. It doesn't matter if you are a seasoned competitor or the weekend warrior. Proper injury prevention can mean the difference between showing up Monday, to training or work feeling empowered and confident at your preparation and performance, or calling in because that "high school injury" never, ever quite healed.

If your ears perked up at the read of "injury prevention," then you already have one foot out of the proverbial grave and back safely on the field of play. According to the CDC, nearly half of all sports injuries in children are preventable. Given that some 30 million children and adolescents participate in youth sports in the United States, it is startling to think that 15 million could have been prevented. There are several ways in which one can avoid missing Monday's meeting, or the mid-afternoon trip to the Emergency Room.

There's a saying among the athletic ranks. It states that, "We are all on borrowed time." So injuries happen. There are precautions we can take to ensure that this is kept to a minimum. The majority of injuries found are sprains, strains, tennis elbow and injuries to the knee. We will cover these injuries and the best ways to prevent and treat once injured.

Prevention of Sports-Related Injuries

Prevention begins with making sure you have the proper equipment for any athletic activity you are about to embark on. Having the proper equipment means having the right tool for the job. You wouldn't show up to a softball game with a tennis racquet, now would you Grant it would make for an interesting show, I highly doubt you would get the results you desired. Along with making sure you have the right equipment you will need to make sure that the equipment you have properly fits. Too large or too small, and it could render your equipment useless. If a helmet is too loose you can still be subject to head injuries. Prevention is your best defense against injury.

Sprains

The most common of all injuries. A sprain is the stretching or tearing of ligaments. The ligaments have the arduous and necessary task of keeping your bones together in a tight grouping at the joints. The most common of these injuries is at the ankle. Being that most of our sports require mobility in our feet, it's no small wonder ankle sprains are at the forefront of this injury list. Properly sized cleats, ankle braces (properly fitted), adequate warming up of joints before athletic play will make for your best defense against injury.

Symptoms

Symptoms include swelling in the affected area. Pain and bruising can also be seen in the injured areas. Hearing or feeling a "pop" at the moment of injury and immobility there afterward. It should be noted that if you can't move or bear weight on the affected area, have pain directly over the bone, or have numbness over the affected area then you should immediately seek a doctor.

Strains

Strains involve an injury to a muscle or to the band of tissue that attaches a muscle to bone. They occur at the muscle or tendon. The tendon is a fibrous tissue and may involve minor sprains which is the overstretching of the tendon or major injuries which involve partial or complete tears of the tendons. You are most likely to experience strains at the hamstrings and lower back.

Symptoms

Symptoms include tenderness, pain in the affected area, redness, bruising, muscle spasms, swelling, and muscle weakness are symptoms of a strain. If you are experiencing a worsening of symptoms despite treatment, or if the pain becomes intolerable then you should seek a doctor.

Tennis Elbow

Of course, there is no way I could have parted without mentioning the bread and butter of the Tennis industry. Tennis Elbow or lateral epicondylitis occurs when the

elbow joint is overloaded, specifically the tendons in the elbow. Athletes aren't the only ones that suffer from this injury, plumbers, painters, carpenters, and butchers.

Symptoms

Pain occurs at the bone outside the elbow, to the forearm and wrist. Pain when shaking hands, turning a doorknob, or holding a coffee cup is a telltale sign you have a tennis elbow injury. Wearing an elbow sleeve to keep the joint warm, and some padding for protection are good measures to take. Properly warming up and listening to your body are also good things to keep in mind. If self-care doesn't help the symptoms, then seeking the aid of a doctor would be most wise.

Treatment

Most of these injuries can be helped with an over-the-counter pain reliever and rest. If you feel you may need a little extra TLC, you can implement the **P.R.I.C.E.** method when treating minor injuries. Protect, rest, ice, compression, elevate. Immediately upon injury, you want to ice the affected area. Protect using splints, brace, or crutches. Rest until you are fully healed. This means mobility has returned and swelling has subsided. Ice for 20 minutes every hour for the first 48 hours. Compression and elevating the injured area above the heart will also aid in reducing the swelling.