



Exercise Safely

Regular exercise is vital for good health. To prevent injury it is important to take steps to avoid sports related injuries all year round. Basic safety techniques could prevent injuries.

To prevent risks of over training one of the biggest things people can do to prevent injuries is simple—**know your body**. If you haven't worked out in years and jump into an unfamiliar fitness routine, or start training with heavy weights you're likely to injure yourself. Start out slowly and increase your exercise as you become accustomed to physical activity.

There are two types of injuries—acute and chronic. Acute injuries include strains (an injury to the muscle or tendon), sprains (an injury to the ligament), fractures and dislocations.

A chronic injury results from overuse. Overuse injuries can be difficult to treat because there often isn't a specific problem that can be fixed—it's a breakdown in mechanics.

Most sports injuries can be treated non-operatively by physiotherapy, rest, massage and other measures.

Here are some tips to prevent sports-related injuries:

Seek the advice of a physician before beginning an exercise program or participating in sports. Your doctor could discover underlying health conditions that you don't even realise you have. It's a good idea to ensure you're in good overall health.

It's important to use certified equipment specific to the sport you're playing or training with. Wearing quality shoes designed for your sport and foot type for example soccer, football, netball, baseball etc will give good arch support, durable heel and flexibility.

Appropriate clothing is important if it's hot outside wear loose-fitting clothing that allows your skin to "breathe." When it's cold, it's important to wear clothing that will keep you warm but not overheated. Sports clothing that reduces perspiration can help regulate the body's temperature.

Mix up your training with other sports and exercises to reduce the risks of overtraining.

Hydration is very important to ensure you're well hydrated with water during sports and exercise. You can lose approximately one and a half litres of fluid for every hour of exercise. One of the first symptoms of dehydration is fatigue, which causes a significant drop in sports performance.

Re Balance Your Lifestyle

Science hasn't been able to prove that stretching prevents injuries, but it does help with flexibility and warms the fibres in your muscles. You may find cooling down decreases muscle soreness post exercise, it is important for lowering your heart rate slowly after activity.

"The no pain-no gain" phrase can be misleading. If you are injured, you need to follow this simple rule. **RICE** is short for rest, ice, compression and elevation. **Rest** can help reduce stress to the injured area. **Ice** should be applied for 20 minutes, four times a day. **Compression** with a bandage helps stabilise the injured area, allowing it to heal, and **elevation** above the heart is important to decrease blood flow and minimise swelling.

Listen to your body. Injuries are more likely to occur if you ignore your body's signals of fatigue, discomfort and pain. Have at least one recovery day, and preferably two, every week. Injuries need rest – trying to 'work through' the pain will cause more damage to soft muscle tissue and delay healing.

If you seem to be suffering from more colds and infections than usual, you could be exercising too much – ease off on your schedule. If you monitor your training, your resting heart rate and keep a training diary you can stay on track, to prevent further stress or injury to the target area.

It's also important to know when to seek medical assistance, remember this goes back to knowing your own body. You know when the pain you're feeling isn't normal.

Get good advice

You can obtain information and advice about exercise safety from your Doctor, a sports medicine physician, physiotherapist or from sporting associations. You can also consult an exercise physiologist. Contact the Australian Association for Exercise and Sports Science to find an Accredited Exercise Physiologist, a directory for Sports Injury Therapy.

Useful Links:

www.aaess.com.au

www.naturaltherapypages.com.au