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8 Tips on How to Prevent Sports Injuries

Sport plays a big role in most of our lives and has many health benefits. Millions of Australians participate in different types of organized and non-organized sport

- An estimated 11.9 million persons aged 15 years and over, or 71.5% of the population, participated at least once per week, on average, in physical activity. This is the weekly participation rate.
- An estimated 8.2 million persons aged 15 years and over, or 49.3% of the population, participated at least three times per week, on average, in physical activity. This is the regular participation rate.

Statistics on Sports Injuries in Australia

- Up to 50% of sports injuries are preventable
- 1 million sports injuries in Australia each year
- 1 in 17 Australians suffer a sports injury each year
- Lower amongst females
- 69% of sports injuries are lower body injuries
- 31% of sports injuries are upper body injuries
- Injury sustained in a previous season increases the risk of further injury by 45%
- Annual cost in treating sports injuries in Australia is $1.65 billion

8 Tips on Preventing Sports Injuries

Following are some general rules for injury prevention no matter what sport you play. Research suggests that injury rates could be reduced by 25% if athletes took appropriate preventative action, including:

1. **Be in proper physical condition to play a sport.**
   If you play any sports, you should adequately train for that sport. It is a mistake to expect the sport itself to get you into shape. Many injuries can be prevented by following a regular conditioning program of exercises designed specifically for your sport.

2. **Know and abide by the rules of the sport.**
   The rules are designed, in part, to keep things safe. This is extremely important for anyone who participates in a contact sport.

3. **Wear appropriate protective gear and equipment.**
   Protective pads, mouth guards, helmets, gloves and other equipment can help to protect your knees, hands, teeth, eyes, and head. Never play without your safety gear.

4. **Rest.**
   Athletes with high consecutive days of training, have more injuries. While many athletes think the more they train, the better they'll play, this is a misconception. Rest is a critical component of proper training. Rest can make you stronger and prevent injuries of overuse and fatigue.

5. **Always warm up before playing.**
   Warm muscles are less susceptible to injuries. The proper warm up is essential for injury prevention. Make sure your warm up suits your sport. You may simply start your sport slowly, or practice specific dynamic stretching exercises.

6. **Cool down after playing and allow for proper recovery.**
   Cooling down with some gentle passive stretches helps return your heart rate and breathing to normal. It also helps prepare your muscles for the next exercise session and helps remove waste product, such as lactic acid, which can accumulate during vigorous exercise.

7. **Avoid playing when very tired or in pain.**
   Pain indicates a problem. You need to pay attention to warning signs your body provides.

8. **Keep Hydrated.**
   Playing in hot weather will result in extra fluid loss. Dehydration contributes to fatigue and may make you more susceptible to cramps and heat stroke.

Unfortunately, along with many health benefits come a number of different sports injuries that impact a great number of participants both in organized and non-organized sport.

Predicting A Sports Injury

Research provides us with helpful clues about the cause of sports injury. There are two factors that outweigh the rest when it comes to predicting a sports injury. They are:

- Having a history of injury. Previous injuries that are left untreated tend to develop into chronic problem areas for many athletes.
- A high number of consecutive days of training. Recovery days reduce injury rates by giving muscles and connective tissues an opportunity to repair between training sessions

Common Injuries

Muscle cramp
A muscle cramp is an uncontrollable and painful spasm of a

muscle. Any muscle can be affected, but the muscles of the calf and foot are particularly prone. A cramp can last for varying periods of time and generally resolves by itself. The exact cause of cramp is unknown but risk factors may include poor physical condition and flexibility, mineral (Sodium/ Potassium/ Magnesium/ Calcium) and electrolyte imbalances, New exercise, muscle fatigue.

Delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS)

This occurs two to seven days after performing new exercises. It is usually related to the muscle lengthening while under tension (eccentric loading). This creates minor disruption and inflammation to the muscle fibres which then repair, creating an increase in strength.

Muscle strain

A strain is a muscle injury produced by excessive tensile stress that causes fibers to tear within the tissue. A muscle strain does not usually result from excess stretch alone, but from a combination of tension and contraction.

Muscles that are vulnerable to strain cross two joints, such as the hamstrings, quadriceps and calf muscles. Muscle damage can be in the form of tearing (part or all) of the muscle fibers and the tendons attached to the muscle. The tearing of the muscle can also damage small blood vessels, causing local bleeding (bruising) and pain (caused by irritation of the nerve endings in the area).

Ligament sprain

Sprains are caused when the ligaments become stretched more then their normal length, resulting in a partial or complete tear. This ligament damage results in the development of abnormal motion at the joint due to the loss of stability.

Initial Treatment of Injury

PRICE

The protocol for immediate treatment of an injury during the first 72 hours.

P is for Protection - Protect any injury from further damage. Stop playing, splints or use crutches to take the weight off a knee or ankle injury.

R is for Rest - Allow an injury time to heal. Ensure rehabilitation time to allow even a small injury to heal.

I is for Ice - By applying Ice onto the injury you will reduce the pain and inflammation. Very cold products can induce hypothermia or cold burn so wrapping the ice in a cloth is advisable. Leave ice on for 10 minutes.

C is for Compression - Compression of the swollen area will help to reduce the swelling. Cohesive, Tear Tape, crepe or any stretchy bandage will suffice.

E is for Elevation - Elevating the injury to above the heart prevents the flow of blood to the area and reduces the swelling.

At PHYSIO4ALL we strongly believe that you should seek advice from your physiotherapist within 24 hours of your injury. Our sports physiotherapists will appropriately manage and treat your injury which will promote healing and speed up recovery time to the injured area. Research strongly supports early intervention to the injured area.

SPECIAL OFFER!!!

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