

Sports-Related Injuries

Common Sports-Related Injuries

Sports-related injuries can happen to anyone, from the weekend runner to the competitive student athlete. Injuries can be caused by landing incorrectly, sudden twists or start-and-stop movements, overuse of a joint, or a variety of other sports-related stresses. Some of the most common sports-related injuries include:

- **Tendinitis** - An inflammation of the tendon caused by overuse of a joint. It is commonly found in knees (runners and cyclists), shoulders (golfers, swimmers, baseball or softball players), and elbows (tennis and baseball).
- **Pulled Hamstrings** - A strain of the muscle that connects the buttocks and the back of the thigh. Often found in athletes whose sports require sudden, powerful movements. A quick stop or acceleration will strain the hamstring, especially if the body is not properly conditioned. Indicated by a mild to severe pain when walking or bending the leg or swelling or tenderness of the back of the thigh, a pulled hamstring requires rest and will heal faster with treatment. Sprinters, hurdlers, and players of such team sports as football are frequently candidates for pulled hamstrings.
- **Shin Splints** - A painful condition caused by an irritation of the tough fibrous membrane surrounding the shin bone (the front portion of the leg above the ankle and below the knee). The injury is commonly found in runners.

Treatment

The key to treating a sports-related injury is to work with a physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) physician who will treat your condition in the most comprehensive, cost-effective manner, provide a proper plan for healing your condition, and prevent further problems.

The vast majority of injuries to muscles, ligaments, tendons, and bones are not surgical problems. The categories of medical conditions described above are usually problems of the musculoskeletal system - the system that consists of muscles, tendons, ligaments, and bones.

PM&R is a medical specialty dedicated to maximizing quality of life. PM&R physicians have advanced training and skill in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of functional disabilities of all types. The treatment options used by PM&R physicians may include physical therapy, occupational therapy, therapeutic exercise, orthotics, and braces. PM&R physicians may also recommend electrotherapies, injection techniques (i.e. epidural cortisone injections), non-operative spine medicine or other manual medicine, pain management, and injury prevention and wellness techniques.

The treatment plan developed by a PM&R physician takes the whole patient into account, with special emphasis on preventing future problems while addressing the current functional disability. In every case, the goal is to help each patient return to home, work, and sports as quickly and completely as possible.

Prevention

Taking the following steps can decrease your risk for sports-related injuries:

- **Prepare for Exercise/Activities**
Understand what muscle groups will be used and slowly start conditioning them. Talk with a doctor to determine the appropriate level of activity.
- **Stretch Muscles Before Exercising**
Muscles and joints need to warm up before strenuous activity. Allow for a "cooling down" period after excessive stresses and strains.

(continued on back)

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- **Use the Proper Equipment**
Using shoes for an activity other than for what they're designed, such as playing basketball or tennis in running shoes, will not provide adequate support and protection. And cheaper is not always better. Running in a pair of cheaply made running shoes may cause discomfort and injury in the future.
- **Don't Force the Body**
If an activity doesn't feel comfortable, a person may not be using the proper technique. An incorrect foot plant or stride can lead to ankle or other related injuries. Consult with a coach or trainer when needed. And don't exercise when injured or sick; this can cause the condition to worsen.
- **Easy Does It**
Pushing yourself beyond practical limits can lead to injury. If you feel pain or lightheaded, stop and take a breath. Start again only when you are feeling better.
- **Rest & Relaxation**
Even professional athletes take a day off. At least once a week, give the body a rest.

Cited from: aaPM&R – *American Academy of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation*

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