

TIP OF THE MONTH



If you need help starting on a sports specific, fitness or strength/conditioning program aimed at improving performance or reducing the incidence of injury, seek out the assistance of a physical therapist. They are an invaluable resource to assess your current physical and medical condition and prescribe the right exercise program for you to achieve your goals.

Be smart and play it smart!

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**PHYSICAL THERAPY
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Reduce Incidence of Injury
in Sporting Activity

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Presented by:



**PHYSICAL THERAPY
ASSOCIATES OF SCHENECTADY, PC**

Reduce Incidence of Injury in Sporting Activity

With more children starting sports at younger ages and adults extending their active lifestyle into later years, the risk of injuries has increased. The majority of injuries related to physical activity occur to soft tissue structures (muscles, tendons, ligaments) and about 5% involve broken bones. Although it is impossible to prevent all injuries related to exercise, sports scientists suggest that injury rates can be reduced by 25% when simple preventive measures are followed. Here are some general recommendations to make your sporting activity or exercise experience as safe and as injury free as possible.

WARM UP 5-10 minutes of steady walking, light jogging, or cycling before exercise activity will increase circulation to cold muscles making them more pliable and less prone to strain or rupture. Studies have shown that an active warm up is associated with better performance than a warm up that consists of only static stretching.

STRETCH After your warm up, perform gentle stretches to all the major muscles that will be used during your exercise or sporting activity. Tight muscles are more prone to injury as they put more stress on the attached ligaments, tendons and bones. Regular stretching can improve muscle flexibility over time. The most effective stretching is after a warm up or workout. Hold stretch for 20-30 seconds.

STRENGTH Some injuries are caused by weakness and an imbalance in muscle strength or endurance as a result of overall physical deconditioning. The risk of injury can occur when your body is not ready to handle the specific demands of your sport or the increased training load. Implementing a strength and endurance program along with sports specific skill development is an integral strategy for injury prevention especially if you are involved in competitive play. Consulting with a coach, sports physical therapist, or athletic trainer will help you in developing a program specific to your needs.

BALANCE Athletic activity demands a high level of balance and body awareness for optimal performance and to reduce the risk of injury. Improving your balance, coordination, and agility skills is a critical component to your conditioning program.

REST AND RELAXATION. Take 1-2 days off each week. Recovery time gives muscles and connective tissue an opportunity to restore and repair themselves in between work-outs. Studies suggest that reducing the number of consecutive days of training can lower the risk of injury. Reducing stress in ones life is also beneficial in reducing the risks of injury. A recent study revealed increased muscular tension due to stress can increase the risk of injury while participating in sports or physical activity.

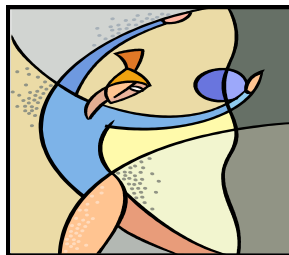
LISTEN TO YOUR BODY. Do not over reach or extend yourself when participating in physical activity. Instead listen to your body and know your physical limits. Begin a new sport or activity slowly and steadily progress to avoid pulling or straining soft tissue and muscles. If you have not undertaken strenuous exercise for some time, it is especially important to build up your stamina, flexibility, and strength gradually to avoid injury. Over time, you will notice your fitness level increase, and you will then be able to increase the intensity and duration of your activity.

MORE IS NOT BETTER. The amount of training you carry out plays a key role in determining your injury risk. Fatigued muscles do a poor job of protecting your working body parts thus increasing the risk of damage to bone, cartilage, tendons, and ligaments. Most injuries occur towards the end of a game or workout due to the onset of fatigue. Be aware of when you reach the point of fatigue and either take a break or adjust your training program. If you are a runner, gradually increase mileage no more than 10% weekly. Runners with mileage in excess of 40 miles per week are at greater risk for overuse injuries.

RESPOND PROMPTLY TO INJURY Pain is a sign of injury, stress, or overuse. Do not play or perform any activity through pain. If pain does not resolve after 1-2 days of rest, consult your physician or physical therapist. The sooner an injury is identified, the quicker treatment can be rendered leading to a shorter healing time and faster return to sports or activity. If injury does occur, then follow an "active-rest" program in order to maintain your fitness level. Active-Rest means you are staying physically active but resting or modifying your activity level from the particular stress or exertion that causes pain or reinjury and prevents recovery.

CROSS TRAIN. Cross train with a variety of activities to provide balance in your muscle development and reduce the risk of overuse injuries and burnout. This is especially important with children as specializing in one sport is not recommended until after puberty. Bicycling and swimming are good nonimpact activities to balance the stress of impact sports.

USE PROPER EQUIPMENT Be sure any sporting equipment fits properly and is in good condition. Athletic shoes should be changed regularly. Use supportive shoe inserts for shock absorption and proper foot positioning to improve lower body alignment, improve muscle efficiency, and reduce excessive strain on back and legs.



COOL DOWN. Equal to a proper warm-up is a proper cool down after physical activity. Spend at least 5-10 minutes performing low level exercise such as walking to recover your heart rate back to normal and help prevent stiffness in joints and muscles. Perform gentle stretches during this time to promote soft tissue lengthening and stress reduction.

HYDRATE. Do not wait until you are thirsty to drink. You should drink before, during, and after workouts especially while exercising in the heat. Water is adequate for exercise that lasts less than an hour. Use sports drink for longer workouts. Avoid caffeine.

WARNING SIGNS. Be aware of the following warning signs as indicators of an injury slowly developing:

- Swelling
- Joint or soft tissue tenderness
- Dull or Sharp pain with or without movement
- Loss of joint mobility or stiffness to move
- Muscle weakness
- Loss of balance or coordination
- Numbness/tingling sensation

If you recognize any of the above symptoms, take precaution. If symptoms do not resolve with rest, ice, or stretching then seek out medical attention. The goal is to prevent further damage. Do not let the problem get any worse by continuing to exercise and ignoring the problem.

MEDICAL CLEARANCE. As part of a pro-active approach to participating in any sporting activity make sure you are in physical condition to safely do so. A regular health check with your doctor is an important screen to assess readiness for athletics and address any medical issues that could pose a risk for injury.

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