

Spring Injury Prevention Tips

Participation in sports and recreational activities is part of a healthy and active lifestyle, but injuries do occur. Luckily, there are many ways to [prevent and treat injuries in spring sports](#). As the proverb goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound in cure. Keep yourself safe this spring by keeping these spring injury prevention tips in mind:

- **Schedule a pre-participation physical exam:** This can screen for potential injury risks like muscle imbalances, cardiac anomalies or poor flexibility.
- **Eating and Sleeping Right:** Following a healthy diet and not skipping meals is also an important part of keeping an athlete in top shape year round. Athletes who eat empty calories by consuming high fat, sugar and processed foods will not have the energy that they need to perform at the highest level and could set themselves up for injury. Be sure to get enough complex carbohydrates, which provides energy and sufficient protein to build muscle, to help perform at your best. Getting enough sleep is important for injury prevention because a well-rested body will be less fatigued, decreasing the likelihood of getting injured.
- **Stay in shape year-round:** Many of us get injured when we begin exercising intensely when the season begins. Sitting indoors during the winter and not exercising takes a toll on our bodies. Although an athlete is conditioned for the recent winter season sports, it doesn't always mean that they're ready for the requirements of their spring season sports. Sport specific training should start slow to avoid overuse injuries. When running, use the guideline of adding no more than 10% week. Overdoing in can cause sidelining damage, such as shin splints and stress fractures when runners begin to undertake too many miles in a short period of time. Throughout the year, athletes should follow a regimen of cardiovascular exercise three days a week, strength training at least two days a week and daily flexibility exercises even when the weather is inclement. During the season, be sure to warm up, cool down and stretch before and after exercising.

- **Safety First:** Be sure to have properly fitting safety gear to protect vulnerable body parts, including helmets, wrist guards, knee and elbow pads, eye-wear, mouth guards, proper shoes (well-worn shoes are notorious for causing overuse injuries). Remember to inspect field conditions before the game. Check for divots, debris and uneven surfaces which can cause ankle sprains and knee injuries.
- **Avoid specialization at an early age:** Approximately 50% of all sports related injuries for children 6-18 are due to overuse. Athletes who participate in various sports tend to have fewer injuries and play longer. Limit playing one sport for no more than five days per week and take at least one day off from organized physical activity. Participation in multiple sports throughout the year provides a wider range of skills as well as rest from single sport activities.
- **Use Proper Technique:** Not only do proper alignment and mechanics save energy and increase efficiency, they also prevent injuries. For example, baseball and softball players, learning proper throwing mechanics and developing a preseason throwing/long toss program can help ramp up to the season. Remember that throwing begins in the legs and core, so working on these important muscles are key. Always remember to follow your leagues pitch count guideline.
- **Stay Hydrated and Wear Sunscreen:** According to the Centers for Disease Control heat illness during practice or competition is the leading cause of death among high school athletes. Heat exhaustion can occur if not consuming enough water and being exposed to high heat and humidity. A dehydrated body is fatigue and injury prone. Be able to recognize the signs of heat exhaustion which are muscle cramps, severe sweating, cold or clammy skin, a fast/weak pulse, weakness, nausea, vomiting and fainting. Any athlete who displays these symptoms should be removed from play, taken to an area where it is cool and contact a medical professional. If heat exhaustion is not recognized, the athlete could then progress to heat stroke which is a medical emergency. This can be recognized by dry skin and unresponsiveness. Immediate medical attention is required to prevent a catastrophic situation.

Even when we do all of the above, injuries still occur. What are the first steps to do when an injury happens?

- **R.I.C.E.:** Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation. Never place heat on a new injury because it can cause more bleeding and swelling.
- **Speak up Sooner Rather than Later:** Report pain to a coach or medical professional as soon as possible, because if an injury is diagnosed early, it is easier to treat than when pain becomes chronic. Seek help from your doctor, athletic trainer, or a physical therapist to be sure your injury is properly diagnosed.
- **Follow Your Recovery Plan:** Jumping back into the action as soon as possible may sound tempting, but can cause more damage. Follow the instructions given by your doctor or physical therapist by doing prescribed exercises, maintaining proper weight bearing precautions and resting as needed.
- **Keep Active, If Possible:** Continue to try to maintain cardiovascular fitness if possible by riding a bike or swimming if you cannot run while you are out of play. This will make your transition back to sports easier.

Looking to get back to your passion after a sports injury? Penn Therapy & Fitness offers expert physical therapy for runners and athletes of all skill levels. Our therapists work with all patients with an eye toward minimizing the risk of injury. [Learn more about the sports performance program at Penn Therapy & fitness.](#)

About the Blogger:



Lynne Gramberg, MSPT, OCS, Cert. MDT, ATC, earned her Physical Therapy Master's degree from Thomas Jefferson University, and her Bachelors of Science degree in Physical Education from Penn State University. She is a board certified orthopedic specialist of the American Physical Therapy Association, Certified in the McKenzie Method of Mechanical Diagnosis and Treatment, and a Graston provider, in addition to being a certified athletic training for over 30 years. As a lifelong resident of Roxborough, she is dedicated to the community and her alma mater, Roxborough High School, where is on the committee for the Roxborough High School Sports Hall of Fame.