

Dealing With Sports Injuries

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Think Prevention First!

The best way to deal with sports injuries is to keep them from happening in the first place. Think of avoiding injury as just another part of the sports rulebook. Knowing the rules of the game you're playing and using the right equipment can go a long way toward preventing injuries.

What Are Some Types of Sports Injuries?

Common reasons why young athletes get injured playing sports include:

- not training or playing properly
- training too much
- not wearing the right footwear
- not wearing the right safety equipment
- rapid growth during puberty

There are two kinds of sports injuries:

1. **Acute traumatic injuries** are things like [fractures](#), [sprains and strains](#), [concussions](#), and [cuts](#). They usually happen after a blow or force — like getting tackled in football or wiping out while skateboarding.
2. **Overuse injuries** include things like [stress fractures](#) and tendonitis. These injuries are also called **chronic injuries** because they happen over time, usually from [repetitive training](#), like running, overhand throwing, or serving a ball in tennis. Overuse injuries might not seem serious at first. But if they're not treated, they usually get worse.

What To Do

If you think you've been injured, pull yourself out of the game or practice, or stop doing your activity or workout. Let a coach or parent know what happened in case you need to see a doctor.

Call a doctor when:

- pain is very bad
- the injured area is swollen
- you're limping
- you can't move the injured area
- pain is not getting better with rest, gets worse, or lasts for a week or more
- you black out or you think the injury is serious

Where Injuries Happen

You can get a sports injury anywhere on your body. Here are some key points to know about common sports injuries.

Head and Neck Injuries

Serious head and neck injuries happen most often in athletes who play contact sports (like football or rugby) or sports with the potential for falling accidents, such as horseback riding and gymnastics.

Head injuries include fractures, concussions, [contusions](#) (bruises), and hematomas. A **hematoma** is bleeding or pooling of blood in or around the brain caused by an impact to the head from a fall, forceful shaking of the head, or a blow to the head.

Neck injuries include strains, sprains, fractures, [burners](#), and whiplash, which is an injury to the neck caused by an abrupt jerking motion of the head. Neck injuries are among the most dangerous sports injuries.

Never try to move someone who may have a neck injury. A mishandled neck fracture could lead to permanent paralysis or even death. Keep the injured person still with his or her head held straight while someone calls for emergency medical help. If the person is lying on the ground, do not try to move him or her.

Back Injuries

Most back injuries are caused by twists or overexertion of back muscles during bending or lifting movements. Back injuries are most common in contact sports like football and ice hockey, or in weightlifting, rowing, golf, figure skating, gymnastics, and dancing.

Sex Organ Injuries

Injuries to the sex organs usually affect guys more than girls because the penis and testicles are outside the body and are more exposed. Injuries to the uterus or ovaries are rare, but breast injuries are a common complaint among teen girls. As the breasts develop, they often can be sore, and a blow from a softball or a collision during field hockey can be painful.

Hand and Wrist Injuries

Hand, finger, and wrist injuries can happen after things like a fall that forces the hand or fingers backward, or a direct blow. As with other injuries, hand and wrist injuries are most common in contact sports, such as football, lacrosse, and hockey, or in sports like gymnastics, field hockey, rowing, and basketball where the fingers, hands, and wrists are at risk.

Foot and Ankle Injuries

Feet and ankles are particularly vulnerable to injury in sports that involve a lot of running. Another reason for foot injuries is wearing the wrong shoes, especially if someone has flat feet, high arches, or other foot differences.

Getting Back in the Game

Your first question after a sports injury will probably be, "When can I play again?" This depends on the injury and what your doctor tells you. Even if you can't return to your sport right away, a doctor or physical therapist might have suggestions and advice on what you can do to stay fit. Always check with your doctor before trying any activity following an injury.

Rehab

A rehabilitation program also can help you stay fit as you recover. If rehabilitation ("rehab" for short) is part of your treatment program, it might include [physical therapy](#), manual therapy, and ultrasound or other technology to help relieve pain and promote healing.

Preventing Reinjury

When you've recovered, you might need new protective gear to protect an injured body part. This can include modified shoes, tape, or a sports brace to provide extra support, or more padding to protect against a direct blow.

To help prevent reinjury, be sure to warm up before practice and games. Take it slow when you first get back to your sport and slowly build back up to your preinjury level.

Most important, know your limits. Check in with your body: If a previously injured area (or any body part) begins to hurt, stop right away and rest. Get help from a doctor if the pain continues. Pain is your body's way of saying something isn't right.