



Health Sheet

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ELIZABETH MATZKIN, MD

Orthopaedic Surgeon

Medical School

Tulane University School of Medicine

Residency

University of Hawaii Orthopaedic

Fellowship

Duke Orthopaedic Shoulder and Sports Medicine

Board Certification

Orthopaedic Surgery

Prior Positions

U.S. Women's Soccer team, Physician

Specialties

Minimally invasive arthroscopic surgery for shoulder and knee, multi-ligament reconstruction, rotator cuff and labral repair and shoulder replacement

Clinical Specialties

Knee cartilage, meniscus and ligament injury, rotator cuff problems, shoulder instability, women's sports injury and prevention, and overuse muscle/tendon injuries

DOCTOR'S NOTES

Contact our Sports Medicine Department at 617 63-ORTHO (67846)

Sports Injury Q&A with Elizabeth Matzkin, MD

SUMMER is a tricky time for weekend warriors and even serious athletes. The weather is warm, the days are longer, and the runners, hikers, golfers, bicyclists, softball and soccer players, Frisbee players, pickup basketball players and more start to head outdoors. But while getting fresh air and, flexing the muscles is good for one's health, working what might be some very relaxed muscles for the first time in a while may bring some unwanted aches and pain and, in some instances, even serious injury. What do you need to watch out for as the warm weather pulls you outside?

Elizabeth Matzkin, MD, a specialist in sports medicine at Tufts Medical Center and a former staff physician for the U.S. Women's Soccer Team, answers some common questions about sports injuries and offers some good advice for staying safe while you play your favorite sports this year. □



What are the most common injuries suffered by the amateur athlete?

Injuries suffered by the "amateur" athlete really are no different than those experienced by professional athletes. Differences exist more in the "weekend warriors" and the aging athletes. Many of these injuries are overuse injuries, such as muscle or tendon strains and ligament sprains.

Are there some sports that are particularly prone to causing injury in the weekend athlete?

Any "weekend" athlete can suffer an injury if he or she has not properly prepared for a sporting event. This includes the athlete who plays soccer, basketball, golf, cycles or runs. Preparation may include previous training, warming up, appropriate gear and not overdoing it.

Are people who have been working out at the gym all winter long at less risk of hurting themselves once they start to play spring and summer sports?

They may be at less risk if they have been doing "sport-specific" training during the winter months. For example, someone who has been running on the treadmill will be properly trained to run outside, but may not be properly trained to play tennis. More "sport-specific" training for tennis may include rotator cuff strengthening exercises and maybe an indoor racquet sport such as racquetball or squash.

What are some things people can do to protect themselves?

Exercising and watching your weight are probably the most important. Proper training to include flexibility and strength training will be important for prevention of common strains and sprains. Use of proper equipment is also important. This includes appropriate shoe wear — especially important for runners and endurance athletes — and use of properly fitted protective equipment when recommended, including kneepads, helmets and eye protection.

When do people need to pay attention to what might be a more serious problem than just a pulled muscle?

The most important thing is to "listen to your body." If it hurts, then stop what you are doing. "No pain, no gain" does not apply for the weekend or aging athlete. If a day or two of rest, ice and an anti-inflammatory does not resolve your problem, then you may want to consult your doctor.

When to ice?

For any acute injury, we recommend ice for 20 minutes at a time.

Do women and men have different risks or get injured differently?

Definitely. For example, there have been many studies that demonstrate the risks of ACL tear are higher in female athletes — as much as 2 to 8 times higher in female soccer and basketball players compared to their male counterparts. The most important thing to prevent this type of injury is for women to develop proper neuromuscular control with strength and stability training programs.

What parts of the body are the most vulnerable and what can people do to protect each one?

This is really sport-specific. Runners and cyclists have more lower extremity injuries, while tennis and volleyball players have more upper extremity injuries. Most injuries can be prevented with proper training and common sense. In general, you should not increase your training more than 10% per week. Whether you increase mileage, weights or time on the playing field, the 10% rule will allow adequate recovery time for your body. If you are unsure how to begin an exercise program or train for a specific sport while avoiding recurrent or chronic injuries, talk with a sports medicine physician about safely maintaining an exercise program.

When to rest and when to get up and back in the game?

Rest is extremely important, especially for endurance athletes. Again, listen to your body. Muscles need time to recover and training too often or too long can do more harm than good. Overuse injuries can consist of tendonitis or stress fractures, which will result in many more missed days at the gym or on the playing field than taking a day of rest when you need it.

What's the number one piece of advice you give to the patients who come to your clinic?

Keep exercising! Younger athletes usually need to focus on strength training to avoid patellofemoral problems and injuries secondary to muscle weakness. Middle-aged athletes need to focus on flexibility training, as they are more prone to chronic or overuse injuries secondary to decreased flexibility and endurance. Older and aging athletes should find a low-impact activity such as walking, swimming or the stationary bike that allows them to continue to benefit from exercise without exacerbation of arthritis or old injuries.