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Special Section

Preventing Sports Injuries

Want to learn more about sports injuries and the best ways to prevent them? Here are some great online resources:

stopsportsinjuries.org From the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine

orthoinfo.aaos.org From the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons

acsm.org From the American College of Sports Injuries

It is estimated that over 15 million sports injuries occur each year in the U.S. Of these injuries, 12 million occur among those aged 5-22 with the balance (for the most part) accounted for by adults 22-40.*

While sports injuries are often out of our control, the good news is a large number of sports injuries can be prevented. Almost half of all injuries are due to overuse and can be limited with proper care. Over 60% occur during practice and can be reduced by better conditioning and technique, and it has been estimated that over 15% among adolescents are related to improper equipment, which can also be addressed.*

Here are six things that commonly lead to sports injuries and how to prevent them.

Playing through the pain. If you work out a part of the body that is already injured, you'll only hurt yourself more and make the injury more serious. Instead, listen to your body. Stop when you feel pain or are too tired to go on.

Never resting. Athletes have to allow time for tears in muscle fibers and tendons to heal. That

doesn't mean you have to sit on your butt. It just means you have to take periods of time off to give your body a chance to repair and strengthen.

Overdoing it from the get-go. Fitness professionals can't emphasize enough that it's best to increase fitness levels *incrementally*. If you push yourself too hard when your body isn't prepared, it's likely that you'll cause damage.

Using poor technique. The most experienced athletes do things a certain way for a reason. It's important for young athletes to learn good technique from

their coaches so they don't form bad habits that can lead to injury.

Not wearing the right gear. Helmets, pads, braces, and guards may seem like nuisances, but they are vital for keeping athletes injury-free. Figure out what you need – and wear it!

Not warming up. See our article on page 70. Warming up increases blood flow and makes your body more flexible and prepared for intense activity. It's one of the most important things you can do to protect yourself from injury. +

* Sources: Department of Health and Human Services, USA; Pediatrics, The Official Journal of the Academy of Pediatrics