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Activity Health Tip #4: OVERUSE INJURIES



There are basically two types of injuries: acute injuries and overuse injuries. Acute injuries are usually the result of a single, traumatic event (macro trauma). Common examples include wrist fractures, ankle sprains, shoulder dislocations and hamstring muscle strain. In most sports, work and recreational activities, overuse injuries are the most common and the most challenging to diagnose and treat.



The human body has a tremendous capacity to adapt to physical stresses. With exercise and activity, bones, muscles, tendons and ligaments get stronger and more functional. This process of exercise breaks down and then builds up tissue. It is when the breakdown occurs more rapidly than the build up that injury occurs.

An overuse injury can happen when you first begin a sport or activity, and try to do too much too soon. Error in training is the most common cause of overuse injuries. There are also technical, biomechanical and individual factors. Even slight changes in technique may cause injury. For these reasons, athletic trainers, coaches and P.E. teachers can play a role in preventing recurrent overuse injuries.

Treatment depends on the specific diagnosis. In general, for minor symptoms, cutting back the intensity, duration or frequency of the offending activity brings relief. Adopt a hard/ easy workout schedule and cross train with other activities that allow you to maintain overall fitness levels while your injured part recovers.

Working with a professional or taking lessons can assure proper training and technique. Paying particular attention to proper warm up before activity and using ice after activity may also help. If symptoms persist, a certified athletic trainer will be able to create a more detailed treatment plan for your specific condition.



Remember, most overuse injuries can be prevented with proper conditioning, training and common sense. Learn to listen to your body. "No pain, no gain" does not apply here. The 10 percent rule is very helpful. In general you should not increase your training program or activity more than 10 percent per week. This allows your body adequate time for recovery and response. This rule also applies to increasing pace or mileage for walkers and runners, as well as to the amount of weight added in strength training programs.

For more information, visit: www.nata.org/industryresources/parentandcoachguide.pdf

This Activity Health Tip from the National Athletic Trainers' Association is intended to prevent injuries and promote health and safety of physically active people. Certified athletic trainers (ATCs) are medical professionals who specialize in the prevention, assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of injuries and illnesses that occur to athletes and the physically active.

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