

# Injury Prevention & Self Care

Here are some guidelines for preventing sports injuries, along with a few self-care tips for treating the minor sports-related health problems that happen from time to time. The information below comes from the registered physical therapists of the University Health Service at UC Berkeley.

## Warm Up

Always warm up before exercise. For example, 3-10 minutes of slow walking or jogging, easy cycling, or light weights helps to increase blood flow to the major muscle groups and increase your metabolic rate to prepare your body for a higher intensity activity.

## Cool Down

After exercising, cool down. Decrease the intensity of your exercise and continue to move for 5 more minutes, then do slow, static stretches for 5-10 minutes. Cooling down helps your body adjust by allowing a proper decrease in heart rate and blood pressure, prevents blood from pooling in your legs, and promotes removal of lactic acid to aid in decreasing muscular soreness, common after a moderate to high-intensity workout.

## Stretch Slowly and Gently

Never bounce, and stop short of pain. Inhale and exhale regularly while stretching. Hold the stretch for 10-30 seconds. Learn Proper Exercise Techniques Join an instructional class or take private lessons, or utilize the guidance of a certified personal trainer.

## Wear Proper Attire

- Shoes should fit well and should be designed for the activity you are involved in. Wear socks made with cotton or wool to prevent blisters.
- Wear shirts on hot days to protect the skin.
- Women should wear sports bras when exercising strenuously.
- Wear helmets for sports such as roller-skating and biking. Wear safety glass for sports such as racquetball and squash. Wear clothes designed for the activity.

## Pay Attention to Nutrition

- Eat regularly and stay well-hydrated (6 8-oz glasses of water daily). Maintain ideal body weight.
- Avoid saturated fat and cholesterol, and too much sugar and refined foods. Eat foods with adequate starch and fiber.
- Eat a variety of foods daily from the major food groups (i.e. fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy products, and lean protein sources).

## Exercising in Warm Weather

- Drink plenty of water before, during, and after exercise. Don't wait until you are thirsty. Wear light-colored, lightweight, loose-fitting clothes.
- Wear a hat or sun visor, sunglasses, and sunscreen. Exercise more slowly and less intensely.
- Be aware of symptoms of heat exhaustion: weakness, dizziness, rapid pulse, headache, muscle cramps, decreased sweating, nausea.



## Exercising in Cold Weather

- Wear a hat and warm clothing to prevent heat loss.
- Avoid overdressing; wear layers that can be removed as you warm up. Wear loose clothing; it traps layers of air and provides good insulation.
- Remove damp or wet clothing as soon as possible. Water increases the rate of heat loss
- and decreases the insulation value of the clothing.

## Rest

If you are tired or have had insufficient sleep, cut down on the duration or intensity of exercise. Also, give your body adequate time to recover from exercise, ideally 24 to 48 hours.

## Causes of Injuries

Do not ignore pain. Pain is the body's response to injury or overuse. As you get accustomed to exercise, you will better be able to distinguish between soreness and pain. Soreness may develop one to two days after a workout and dissipate 24 to 48 hours later. Pain can occur immediately and persist with everything you do.

## Stiffness and Soreness Caused By Overtraining

- Intensity - exercising too much and too hard
- Frequency - exercising too often, not giving your body enough time to recover (24 to 48 hours)
- Dehydration
- Impending or low-grade illness

## Back Pain

- Improper technique while bending and lifting Weak abdominal muscles
- Inflexibility in the hamstrings or hip flexors
- Hypermobility in the low back from excessive stretching of hamstrings and pelvic girdle muscles
- Emotional stress

## Other Causes

- Ill-fitting shoes
- Poor exercise equipment - weight machines that don't fit or align properly with your body

## Injury Treatment

### For treatment of minor injuries not involving the eye, follow the RICE procedure:

- Rest the injured area by reducing activity and immobilizing it.
- Ice the injured area for 20 minute periods on, 40 minutes off, to help decrease inflammation or pain.
- Compress the injured area by wrapping for at least 30 minutes to prevent swelling.
- Elevate the injured area above heart level. If pain or swelling worsens after 24 hours, see a physician.
- *Seek Medical Help For:*
- Any eye injury
- Severe pain, disability, or numbness
- An injured joint or broken bone
- Loss of movement
- Minor injury which does not improve or heal within 3 weeks
- Infection, pus, red streaks, swollen nodes, or fever



## Related Services at Tang Center

### For Students

Advice Nurse: (510) 643-7197

Appointments: (510) 642-2000

Physical Therapy by referral: (510) 642-06

Specialty Clinics by referral: (510) 643-7177

### For Faculty and Staff

Please refer questions to your health plan or primary care provider.



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