

Celebrate Wellness!

Sports

People of all ages enjoy physical activity. The benefits of sport are many; yet aches, pains, and injuries are the risk. Recreational athletes, power walkers, competitive football players, runners, dancers, and others all are likely to face injury risk. How can you minimize your down-time so that you can enjoy all the healthy activities you and your family enjoy? Here are some facts and tips, courtesy of the Virginia Chiropractic Association.

The highest injury rates tend to appear in contact, competitive sports. Rugby and lacrosse, for example, result in approximately 30 injuries per 1000 hours of participation. On the other end of the spectrum, walking results in approximately 2 injuries per 1000 hours. Running appears somewhere between the two extremes at 11 injuries per thousand hours. Since many runners are internally or externally competitive, and since runners contact the ground with 3-5 times body weight as force with each stride, perhaps their injury rate is not surprising despite the lack of violent contact with other participants.

An injury is more than mere aches and pains. Injury is typically defined as damage to an athlete which limits or prevents normal participation in a sport or activity. A key to successful and enjoyable athletic participation and success is limiting such events.

Here are several tips:

- Avoid thermic (temperature-caused) injuries. When it's cold, bundle up. Likewise when it's hot, wear suitable clothing, and also ensure proper hydration. When feasible, consider working out in cooler conditions, such as moving a mid-day run to the morning. Also, acclimate. Especially with extremes of heat, the body needs a few weeks to get used to the stress. Be sure that your child's big soccer game in the heat isn't his or her first exposure to exercise in warm temperatures. As with most stresses, the body can adapt given time and repeated, gradually increased trials.
- Wear proper equipment. Tennis shoes are not appropriate for basketball and running. In contact sports, be sure that protective equipment is worn at all times; and be sure it fits properly, especially with growing children. Strongly consider eye protection and mouth guards. Even if you're a participant in a senior basketball league that does not require such equipment, overcome your juvenile sense of what's "cool" and put on the goggles or whatever equipment that might save you pain and suffering. If eye protection was good enough for NBA legends like Kareem and James Worthy, it's good enough for you and me.
- Use (and learn) correct form. There's no substitute for pure grit and determination; but it has been said, "Practice doesn't make perfect. PERFECT practice makes perfect." An athlete can hit hard, and safely, without unduly risking paralysis or death. Runners can learn to improve habits that, uncorrected, will tend to lead to performance deficits and injury. Find a coach, or a peer group, that can guide you to your goals.
- Trust those who know your sport. There are people who fit shoes for a living. Running stores specialize in runners, and the better ones will match your foot, running style, and goals to a shoe that suits you. If you're a dancer, go to a specialist in that field. If you're a contact-sport athlete where protective equipment is permitted or required, top athletic trainers are well-versed in properly fitting lacrosse, football, and other equipment.
- Trust the health care professionals. If you're an athlete, you may feel more comfortable seeking health care from a doctor who understands you and your sport. If you're a swimmer, ask your master's swim group who they trust for their shoulders or backs. Regardless of your sport, there's a doctor in your town who's made a name for him/her-self treating athletes just like you. Don't worry if you're just a recreational athlete. A good doctor will not only make time for you, but will also be devoted to helping you reach your unique goals.
- Trust the experts in human performance. Doctors of chiropractic (DCs) are uniquely trained to analyze and optimize the function of the nervous system and the human frame. Whether balancing out the joints of the low back, working with a shoulder girdle, prescribing orthotics, or helping an athlete overcome a functional limitation, doctors of chiropractic are excellent choices for athletes seeking to overcome injury -- or preventing it in the first place. For many years, DCs have been fixtures the week before, and day of, national and international triathlon championships. They work with collegiate teams, and most professional sports teams have official relationships with chiropractic physicians. When the world comes together at the Olympic Games, the nations also bring their officially credentialed DCs with them. Though there are specialty-trained chiropractors (recognized credentials include "CCSP" and "DACBSP"), the key is to find the doctor who can help you. Do your homework, and you're likely to reap exceptional results.



Celebrate Wellness! is provided as a public service by the Virginia Chiropractic Association, POB 15, Afton, VA 22920, Phone 540-932-3100,

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For more information about health and well-being, ask your chiropractor, find a highly trained chiropractor on-line at www.virginiachiropractic.org, or call the Virginia Chiropractic Association at 540-932-3100.

i "Injuries in Recreational Adult Fitness Activities." The American Journal of Sports Medicine, vol. 21 (3), pp. 461-467, 1993.