COMMON SPORTS INJURIES

Sports-related injuries can occur as the result of a single traumatic event, such as an impact or fall, or from repeated overuse and strain on muscles, tendons, and/or ligaments.

Here are a few of the most common sports injuries.
PULLING YOUR LEG

Strains and sprains make up the bulk of sports injuries.

Strains happen when muscles or tendons are overstretched or torn - if someone has a pulled muscle, that means they have a muscle strain. The most commonly strained muscles are the hamstrings.

Strains are best prevented by proper stretching, strengthening, and proper warm-ups before athletic activity.
Sprains happen when ligaments are overstretched or torn. Sprained ankles often happen when a fall or awkward landing from a jump forces the ankle joint to move in an unusual way, stressing or possibly tearing the ligaments surrounding it. Walking, running, or jumping on an uneven surface can also cause a sprained ankle.

Stretching, strengthening, and balance exercises (as well as supportive footwear) can help reduce the risk of ankle sprains.
YOU’RE TEARING ME APART!

Many other muscles, tendons, and ligaments frequently tear. ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) tears tend to happen in sports that put stress on the knees through jumping, sudden stops, and rapid changes in direction.

Keeping the strength of hamstring and quadriceps muscles balanced and practicing safe landing and pivoting techniques can help prevent ACL tears.

Factoid!
Around 55% of sports-related injuries involve the knees.
The meniscus is a piece of cartilage that cushions the space between the femur and tibia. When a sudden stop or pivot has enough force behind it, the meniscus can tear.

The risk of a meniscus tear is particularly high in sports such as football, basketball, or tennis. Increased age also puts athletes at a greater risk for this type of injury.
The acetabular labrum is a ring of connective tissue holding your femur in place within the socket of the hip joint (acetabulum). Frequent pivoting and twisting motions, as well as acute injury to or dislocation of the hip joint, can cause this to tear.

The risk of a labral tear can be lowered by strengthening the muscles surrounding the hip and not putting one’s full weight on the hip joint when the legs are at the extremes of the hips’ range of motion.
Baseball and tennis players often suffer from rotator cuff injuries, which include tears to the tendon of the supraspinatus muscle.

Such tears can occur gradually from repetitive overhead arm motions or as the result of a sudden acute injury.

Maintaining balanced muscle strength around the back of the shoulder and the shoulder blade can help reduce the risk of rotator cuff tears.
Sometimes, inactivity during the recovery process for an injury (such as a supraspinatus tear) can cause the connective tissue encasing the shoulder joint to become tight and thick. The resulting condition is known as adhesive capsulitis or “frozen shoulder”.

In order to avoid adhesive capsulitis, it is important to coordinate with a physical therapist to find exercises that will maintain the shoulder joint’s range of motion during injury recovery.
Inflammation due to repeated activity can result in painful conditions such as bursitis and tendinitis.

Bursitis affects the bursae, small fluid-filled sacs that cushion the shoulders, elbows, hips, knees, and ankles. When there is frequent and intense pressure on the bursae of any of these joints, they can become inflamed.

Using knee pads when performing tasks that require kneeling for long periods of time can help reduce the risk of bursitis in the knees.
The plantar fascia connects the heel bone to the toes. Putting stress on this band of tissue can lead to overstretching and the formation of small tears, both of which cause inflammation and pain in the heel and bottom of the foot.

Sports putting a lot of pressure on the heels and professions requiring long hours of standing (teaching, nursing, retail, culinary) carry an increased risk of plantar fasciitis.
Lateral epicondylitis, also known as tennis elbow, occurs when the tendons attaching to the outside of the elbow become inflamed or develop microtears from repetitive actions common in racket sports like tennis.

Proper stretching and warm-up exercises, as well as strengthening the forearm muscles and using proper stroke technique, can help lower the risk of developing tennis elbow.
There are two types of inflammation that can occur on the Achilles tendon: tendinitis and tendinosis. Tendinitis happens when there is too much tension on the musculotendinous unit and microtears form. Tendinosis is the result of the gradual degradation of collagen fibers in the musculotendinous unit. This usually occurs because of chronic overuse.

Again, proper warmups, stretching, strengthening, and avoiding putting excess stress on the tendons can reduce the risk of injury.
Shin splints happen when repetitive and intense impact puts stress on the connective tissue (periosteum) that attaches the tibia to the surrounding muscles.

People with flat feet or high arches have an increased risk of developing shin splints. So do athletes who are returning to intense workouts after a period of inactivity.

Supportive footwear with proper arch support and shock absorption can help prevent shin splints.
Stress fractures occur when muscles become fatigued from repeated intense impacts. When they are unable to absorb the shock from these impacts, the role of shock-absorber transfers to the bones, leaving them with tiny cracks.

Cross-training, wearing supportive shoes, and maintaining a diet rich in Calcium and Vitamin D can help athletes avoid stress fractures.
Dislocations frequently affect joints such as the shoulder and fingers.

A dislocated shoulder occurs when sudden impact “pops” the rounded end of the humerus (either part of the way or all the way) out of the cup-like portion of the scapula.

When this happens, the connective tissue holding the humerus in place (which includes the muscles and tendons of the rotator cuff and the glenoid labrum) can tear.
Concussions (a form of traumatic brain injury) are caused by sudden acceleration or deceleration or forceful impacts to the skull.

The meninges and cerebrospinal fluid surrounding the brain usually keep it in place, but head trauma can cause the brain to move around and hit the inside of the skull, damaging nerves and blood vessels.

If suffering from a concussion, it is important not to return to strenuous or risky activities until instructed to do so by a doctor.
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