



KAISER PERMANENTE®

Sports Injury Prevention

Sports injuries often result from poor conditioning, trauma, or muscle overuse. Before participating in sports, therefore, it's important to first establish a basic fitness routine so you can withstand the often unexpected rigors that are involved in sport. It's also important to know when you need to take a break or take some time off from your chosen activity in order to avoid muscle overuse.

Before going on, let's back up one step: Adults beginning a new exercise program should first discuss it with their doctor if they are over the age of 40 or have known chronic medical problems, such as heart disease, diabetes, or arthritis.

Now, here are five tips for sports injury prevention:

- 1.) Warm up and cool down with slow, gentle activities. Save stretching for your cool-down period. And never bounce when you're stretching, such as quick repeated toe-touching. This method of stretching can cause injury.
- 2.) Build up gradually to your desired duration and intensity of exercise. Don't try to get there overnight. And take the time to learn the right techniques, such as how to pitch a ball.
- 3.) Invest in the right equipment. Wear supportive, well-cushioned shoes for running, aerobic dancing, and walking; wear helmets and protective gear for football, bike riding, and rollerblading; and make sure that your bicycle's seat and handlebars are adjusted to fit your body.
- 4.) Vary your activities so that you are regularly using different muscle groups. For example, alternate days of walking with biking, aerobic dancing, or swimming. This is called cross-training.
- 5.) If your only chance to exercise regularly is in the early morning or evening when it's dark outside, make sure you take precautions. Runners, walkers, cyclists, and rollerbladers who use the streets should have fluorescent patches on their clothing and equipment and should obey the rules of the road. Also, be aware of what's happening around you. Walkmans may be dangerous because they drown out any noise or warnings that keep you alert to danger. You might consider working-out inside when it's dark outside.

You don't need to have pain to make gains in fitness. Rest when you're tired or hurt. If you get hurt, it may be because you chose an activity that didn't match your current level of fitness or your skill level. While you recuperate and heal, try another activity that doesn't stress the injured area. Resume your regular activity gradually, starting slowly and building up only when you no

longer feel pain.

Also, if you've strained or sprained a muscle, ligament, tendon, or bone, apply the R.I.C.E. treatment—meaning Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation. Rest the injured area for at least 24 to 48 hours. Apply ice or cold packs for ten minutes several times a day for the first 72 hours after injury. Wrap the injury with an Ace bandage to compress the injury, but don't wrap it too tightly. And finally, elevate the injured area on pillows whenever you're sitting or lying down.

Although a modest amount of muscle soreness is acceptable, pain in or near the joints is never a good sign. If you experience sharp pain, or pain in the joints or tendons that does not improve within three days of the R.I.C.E. treatment, you should call your health care professional.



For additional health information you can trust:

- Log on to our members-only Web site at www.kaiserpermanente.org/california, then click the "Kaiser Permanente Members Only" button
- Visit your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center
- Check your Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone messages at 1-800-33 ASK ME (1-800-332-7563)

To get your free Handbook and Healthphone Directory, call 1-800-464-4000.

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent health problems or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor or other health care professional.

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REGIONAL HEALTH EDUCATION