

General Injury Prevention Tips for Athletes

- Pre-season conditioning is vital. You should be preparing for your sport BEFORE the first day. Practice sport specific drills, cardio-endurance drills, stability drills, stretching/flexibility exercises, and strengthening exercises.
 - Give yourself time to adjust to exercising for your sport, especially in the heat, by gradually increasing the intensity or duration of activity over the course of two weeks. Do not just “jump right into it”
- Warm-up and cool-down for a minimum of 5-10 minutes each. Incorporate stretching AFTER the warm-up and AFTER the cool-down. A warm up should consist of total body movements that work the large muscle groups and should last at least 3-5 minutes but preferably more like 5-10 minutes. THEN you stretch all of the big muscle groups that you will be using in your workout.
 - Dynamic stretching vs static stretching
 - If you feel like you don't get good enough of a warm up or stretch with the team or that you do not have enough time and it feels rushed.....get there early and warm up/stretch on your own. No excuses!
 - You should be stretching to increase your flexibility and range of motion when you wake up in the morning, before practice, after practice, and at night (preferably in the shower when your muscles are warm). You never want to stretch cold muscles.
- Work on core strength and stability!! Power is derived from the core for every movement that you make. It is vital to have a strong and stable core. If you have lower back issues especially work on your core every single day. Some great core exercises are planks, super mans, swimmers, pelvic bridges, bird dogs, ect. Talk to your certified athletic trainer or a personal trainer for more tips on core strength.
- Focus on proper technique for the best results!
 - Low back injuries occur from lack of hamstring flexibility, a weak core, as well as improper lifting form and pulling mostly with your arms. Your back should remain a straight line.
- Ice after practice and stretch after practice on your own. It is your body and your responsibility! If something hurts.....ice it. Ice dulls pain and stops inflammation. Do NOT use heat on a new injury. Ice for first 72 hours
- Listen to your body! Communicate with parents, coach, ATC, ect with how you are feeling and if there are any concerns. Do not play with pain. If you are in pain of any kind go see your certified athletic trainer or other medical professional. On that note, you should also know how to differentiate between soreness and pain
- Know soreness vs. injury
 - Report injuries directly when they happen. If you push through you could make it worse
 - A sharp or stabbing pain that is on one side of the body and not the other could be cause for concern. A dull achy feeling that is felt in the same muscle/area on both sides of your body (bilateral) is most likely just soreness.
- Hydration is key. What you drink today affects you tomorrow. Stay away from soda, caffeine, or energy drinks that actual dehydrate you and deplete you of essential nutrients. Water, water, water!
 - Bring your own water and drink plenty the day before practice or game play, day of, during the game or practice, in between tournament games and after all games or practices. If you will be playing for more than an hour and a half it is recommended to add some sports drinks into your water routine to supplement electrolytes.
 - Dehydration compromises the body's ability to resist disease & injury. Dehydration of only 3% is associated with a 10% loss in strength. Proper hydration, on the other hand, has been shown to improve performance by up to 25%.
 - Drink plenty of water before practice, during practice, and after practice. All participants should consume 8 -12 ounces of water about 30-minutes before arriving at the field, should take breaks every

15-20 minutes during activity where they drink 4-8 ounces of water (even if they are not thirsty), and drink plenty of water after practice.

- Recommendation: Try and drink 50%-100% of your bodyweight in ounces of water daily
- Pay attention to your urine and the rate at which you are sweating. The lighter your urine the more hydrated you are. If it is a dark yellow you are not drinking enough water. Also, if you are really hot but stop sweating this is a major problem and you need to cool your body down immediately!
- Nutrition is also very important! What you fuel your body with also makes a difference in your performance and injury prevention
 - We need to replenish what we lost from exercise, including glycogen stores and muscle protein breakdown. Proper nutrition will speed your recovery between workouts, helping you perform better, and reducing your chance of injury.
 - Recommendation: Consume easy to digest carbs and protein before, during, and immediately after practice. Consume slow digesting carbs, protein, and fat at all other meals. Do not attempt to go low carb! That diet trend has no business with athletes! When glycogen stores are inadequate, muscle recovery is slowed. Strenuous exercise can completely deplete glycogen stores within just a single 3 hour practice.
- Avoid playing on multiple teams of the same sport with overlapping seasons. Also, try to avoid playing the same sport all year round. This leads to overuse injuries from constantly working the same muscles. You should take 2-3 consecutive months off a year from your main sport
- Wear the right gear. Athletes should wear appropriate and properly fitting garments. Dress appropriately for your sport, for its location, and for the weather. Make sure to wear all protective equipment like helmets, mouth guards, pads, and goggles properly.
 - Sunscreen or protective clothing!
 - Multiple layers when cold
- Sleep: Sleep is very important for the body to reenergize and reboot itself
 - Athletes who sleep less than 8 hours per night have a greater risk of being injured
 - Recommendation: Aim for 8-10 hours of sleep per day to function at full capacity
 - Naps count toward that time
- General rules for treating injuries:
 - R.I.C.E! Rest, ice, compression, elevation. Ice 20 min on, 30 min off. It is important to let the area warm up in between icings
 - No heat for 72 hours!! It increases the inflammation process
 - Go see a sports medicine professional right away! Athletic trainer, doctor, ect.