

How to prevent common spring injuries

May 6 2024, by Danielle M. Torp



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With spring in full bloom, warm weather and an increase in outdoor activities, the risk of injury also increases. Whether you're a seasoned athlete or want to enjoy more daily movement in your routine, injuries can impact individuals of all levels and can range from minor sprains to more serious conditions needing medical attention.

Overuse injuries can affect individuals across all ages and skill levels. They are caused by repetitive motions and stress that usually impact joints (knees, elbows, shoulders) but may also affect other parts of the body (lower leg—shin splints). These types of injuries are common in activities and sports such as running, cycling, baseball, softball, tennis and golf.

The best way to heal overuse injuries is to rest and allow time for healing. While you are resting from the activity that caused the injury, you should focus on properly stretching and strengthening the surrounding muscles. A health care provider may recommend [physical therapy](#) to help improve range of motion, strength and flexibility.

Examples of [overuse injuries](#):

- Runner's knee. Also known as patellofemoral pain syndrome, this is described as pain and swelling around the kneecap which can worsen during or after physical activity. This injury is common among runners due to the impact placed on the knees. Running on uneven surfaces, downhill or on hard surfaces can increase the risk of developing runners knee.
- Shin splints. Also known as medial tibial stress syndrome or exercise-related lower leg pain, is described as pain in the lower leg during or immediately after physical activity. This injury is most common in runners, but can also occur in soccer and basketball. Stress fractures are also common in this area, so be sure to see a health care provider if your symptoms persist.

To prevent these types of injuries from occurring, it is important to properly warm-up and stretch before running or any physical activity. Wearing proper shoes and running on level ground will also help prevent injury.

Acute injuries are sudden injuries from a specific event and typically cause immediate pain, swelling, and loss of function to the area. These types of injuries usually require attention from a health care provider to assess the severity of the injury.

Most acute injuries cannot be prevented but with an adequate warm-up, attention to your surroundings, and proper protective equipment, these injuries can be avoided.

Examples of acute injuries:

- Ankle sprains. This injury causes pain, swelling and [limited mobility](#) around the ankle, making it difficult to walk or engage in physical activity. Ankle sprains can happen during any physical activity, but are most seen in running, soccer, basketball or other high-impact sports. All ankle sprains should be considered serious and require medical attention for proper treatment and healthy recovery.
- Concussions. A concussion is a [traumatic brain injury](#) that occurs when the head is jolted or hit and causes the brain to bounce against the skull. Concussion most commonly occurs in contact activities such as football, lacrosse or soccer. Symptoms of a [concussion](#) can include headache, nausea, dizziness or loss of consciousness. While some can be mild, all concussions should be taken seriously and require prompt medical attention from a [health care provider](#). Wearing helmets, following proper form, technique and guidelines can help prevent concussions.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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