

New Options for *Wellness* news



Stanford Linear Accelerator Center

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Wellness Activities

- To register for SLAC Summer Health Improvement Program classes go to: <http://hip.stanford.edu/classes-register.html>
- For information or to participate in the Stanford BeWell Program go to: <https://hprc.stanford.edu/bewell2009/>
- Stress Counseling:** Rosan Gomperts & Kevin Carr, Stanford Help Center counselors at SLAC on Tues. 10 -4 PM, Thurs. 8-11AM in the Medical Dept. Call Ext.2281for an apt. at SLAC, or (650) 723-4577 for an apt. at the Stanford campus office.
- Massage:** Mer Baldoza, CMT, is at SLAC medical Monday - Friday, 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm Call Ext. 2281 or 510-754-7927 to schedule an appointment.
- Gym:** weights & equipment in NW corner of Bldg. 34. Call Kelly Ramsey x8663 or Luis Juarez, x3752 to join, or for more information.
- Soccer:** On the front lawn Mon. & Thurs. at noon. Call Rafael Miranda, x4471 or Bob Traller, x4063
- Volleyball:** Tuesdays 12:00 to 1:00 pm and Thursdays from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Lawn in front of building #41. Please email Nicolas to be on the volleyball email list! For more information: Contact [Nicolas Berger](#) at x3434 All skills welcome! No experience necessary!

Breaks, Tears and Strains

Preventing Sports Injuries

You've heard about the many health benefits of physical activity. On top of improving your fitness, exercising and playing sports can also help boost self-esteem, coordination and self-discipline—particularly for children. But these benefits can come at a price: sports injuries. Fortunately, you can prevent many sports injuries by taking some simple precautions.

Contact sports like football put athletes at obvious risk. Of special concern are severe injuries to the neck, spinal cord and, for young



athletes, growth plates—the areas of developing cartilage where bone growth occurs.

“The highest rates of injuries occur in sports that involve contacts and collisions,” says Dr. Lynne Haverkos, a pediatrician at NIH. “Head injuries are the most serious of the sports-related injuries, and although fatal head injuries are rare, they are the leading cause of death from a sports-related injury.” Haverkos says that about 21% of traumatic brain injuries in kids are related to sports and recreational activities. Many of those are bicycling, skateboarding and skating injuries.

That's why the first thing you need to do is make sure you're using the right helmet or other protective gear for your sport. And be sure it fits properly.

But virtually any part of your body can be injured during sports or exercise. Many injuries involve the musculoskeletal system: muscles, bones and associated tissues like cartilage. “**Sprains** and **strains** are among the most common injuries people get,” Haverkos says, adding, “Knees, ankles and wrists are commonly injured joints.”

Equipment can play a role in these types of injuries as well. From shoes to bicycles to ice skates, whatever your sport, good equipment that fits your body properly can help you prevent all kinds of problems.

Different people tend to get different types of injuries. The bones, muscles, tendons and ligaments of young athletes, for example, are still growing and more prone to injury. Their growth plates are weaker than the nearby ligaments and tendons. More adults than ever are participating in sports. Less agile and resilient than they once were, adults can be more prone to injury than they think.

You're more likely to hurt yourself if you haven't been keeping fit. People who take the winter off and start rigorous activity as soon as the weather improves are prone to injury. If you try to pack a week's worth of activity into a day or 2 on the weekend, you're also at risk. "It's the sudden changes that really get you, the sudden jumps in activity," says Dr. Martha Murray of Children's Hospital, Boston.

If you've been off for a while, don't try to do too much at first. "You should think about any sports participation as something you need to prepare for," Murray says. Whatever your age and whatever level of sport you do, it's important to train your muscles and joints so they have adequate strength, endurance and flexibility. "Start slow and then build up so you are ready when the activity starts," she says.

Learning to listen to your body will help you avoid injury. "If you have pain when doing an activity, stop," Murray advises. Never push yourself to play with pain. "If you push on through mild injuries, you can aggravate them and make them worse," Haverkos says. You can hurt yourself by overdoing it even if you don't have pain. "If you're fine during the activity, but have soreness that night and feel fine the next day," Murray says, "that's often part of your body getting used to the new activity. But if you're sore for 3 days, you've done too much."

Doing different sports on different days using different muscle groups—called cross-training—can also help prevent injury. "Different sports may have wear and tear

on different muscle groups," Murray explains. "If you cross-train, that gives muscles and joints a chance to recover." Strive for a total body mix of cardiovascular, strength training and flexibility exercises.

Warm-up exercises, such as stretching or light jogging, before an activity reduce the chance of muscle strain or other injury. And make sure to cool down. For example, after a race, be sure to walk or jog lightly for 5 minutes so your pulse slows down gradually. After a workout, when the body's tissues are warmer and more flexible, is also the safest time to do stretching to work on your flexibility.

NIH is funding many research projects into repairing sports injuries. Other scientists are looking into why some people are more susceptible to injury than others. Female athletes, for example, have higher injury rates than men in many sports. Both Murray and Haverkos are excited about promising new research into safety training programs and other methods for preventing injuries in the first place.

Don't let the prospect of getting injured scare you off. We already know a lot about how to prevent injuries. And the benefits you can get from sports and exercise are too important to ignore.

Dealing with an Injury

If you have severe pain, swelling or numbness, or can't tolerate any weight on the injured area, contact your health care provider or go to an emergency room. It's probably okay to treat less severe injuries at home—at least, at first. Follow the RICE method:

Rest. Give the injured area time to heal.

Ice. Apply an ice pack for up to 20 minutes at a time, 4-8 times a day.

Compression. Wrap the area with an elastic bandage.

Elevation. If possible, keep the injured area elevated above the level of the heart.

If you're using RICE but the pain or other symptoms get worse, contact your health care provider.