

ASK PAUL



HOW CAN I STAY INJURY FREE?

BY HEEDING A FEW TRAINING DO'S AND DON'TS YOU CAN SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE YOUR RISK OF SUSTAINING A WORKOUT-RELATED INJURY.

Q I am a relatively new exerciser; however, I am concerned that I may get injured in the process of increasing my exercise intensity and volume. Can you tell me the most common injuries I need to watch out for and how I can avoid them this summer?

A Many new participants to exercise are worried about the risk of injury. However, in real terms the benefits of exercise greatly outweigh any possible risk associated with maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle.

That being said, there are some common injuries that we do see among the exercising population and you will be happy to know that these injuries can often be prevented, simply by following these tips and training strategies.

Common Injury 1: **Anterior knee pain**

Some physiotherapy and sports medicine clinics spend nearly 50 per cent of their time treating people who suffer from pain in and around the front of their knee. The cause of this pain can be due to conditions such as patellofemoral pain syndrome, patella tendinopathy or iliotibial band friction syndrome.

Avoid anterior knee pain by:

Increasing your level of activity gradually. Do not increase volume or intensity of exercise by more than 10 per cent each week.

Avoiding excessive incline running. This



Low back pain, shoulder pain and anterior knee pain are all common injuries that can be avoided this summer

increases rotational forces around the knee and puts greater strain on the joint.

Keeping your knee in line with your second toe (the one next to the big toe) during most lunging and squatting activities. This helps reduce pressure on the patellofemoral joint.

Making sure you have good shoes. The 10-year-old pair of sneakers that you found in the cupboard will probably not provide adequate support during exercise.

Common Injury 2: Shoulder Pain

Many exercising individuals are at risk of shoulder pain when they start a new exercise program; and the risk of pain in this area more than doubles if you have had a shoulder injury in the past. Common problems that affect the shoulders of active people include rotator cuff tendinopathy, impingement syndromes, acromioclavicular joint strain and referred pain from the cervical spine.

Avoid shoulder pain by:

Including some specific strengthening exercises for the small rotator cuff muscles (your physiotherapist or personal trainer can show you some of these).

Making sure you can always 'see your hands' when doing weight training exercises such as shoulder presses and pulldowns.

Making sure you allow rest days for your shoulders (i.e., do NOT do a heavy chest workout on day one, return for a massive back and shoulders session on day two and then swim 5km on day three.) For those smaller shoulder stabilisers you need to allow suitable rest days to recover from intensive training sessions.

Ensuring you have adequate body roll, if you are keen on swimming. Always get a swim coach to check your technique before increasing your distances too rapidly.

Common Injury 3: Low Back Pain

While it is true that some exercising people experience low back pain as a result of exercise, most medical research confirms that exercise is



IN SUMMARY

While many people are concerned about the risks involved in exercise, the truth is that typical fitness centre activities such as weight training, group fitness classes and cardiovascular equipment training have a much lower injury risk than the majority of team and individual sports. In fact, it is thought that the removal of the 'competitive' aspect is one of the major reasons for this.

Take heed of the suggestions made above, make sure that you consult your local physiotherapist or sports physician about any pain or problem before it affects your training program, ask your personal trainer to check your exercise technique regularly and, above all, get out there and enjoy being physical!

actually one of the best preventative measures you can take, to reduce the risk of lower back pain. However, the people who do end up with back pain may be suffering from conditions such as lumbar disc degeneration, facet joint strain, sacroiliac joint dysfunction or simple lumbar muscle strain and spasm.

Avoid lumbar spine pain by:

Ensuring the joints in your spine are stretched and moved through a full range of motion every day. This may involve simple 'knee to chest' stretches and 'back extensions' on your tummy.

Moving around as much as you can during work hours, and when you arrive at the gym take five to ten minutes every time, to rotate, flex and extend your spine prior to commencing your exercise routine.

Getting your trainer or physiotherapist to show you a range of core stability exercises that will strengthen the muscles that control your lower back. This will also minimise your risk of injury.

WANT MORE?

Interestingly, many low back injuries happen between exercises, rather than during the actual lift, so be extra careful when lifting dumbbells from the floor, or while twisting to place weighted plates on machines. Email editor@fitnessfirst.com.au for a copy of 'Enter the Safety Zone', a previously published article about safety in the gym).

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Paul has launched a new web site for health professionals wanting to increase business skills and profits. To download some great FREE materials and to find out about Paul's 2010 seminar series 'Business Success Principles for Health Professionals - How to Make This Year Your Best Ever' visit www.healthbusinessprofits.com or email hq@getactivephysio.com.au for more information.