

## Tips for Avoiding Sports-Related Injuries in the Summer Months

Susan Chabot, Chief of Orthopedic Surgery at Norwood Hospital

Whether hiking, swimming, or playing a quick pick-up game, summer is the season when it's most clear that sports are not just for the pros or for kids. An increase in physical activity means an increase in the potential to sustain a sports-related injury.

Orthopedic surgery has come a long way towards helping professional and amateur athletes, senior citizens, and others in recovering from injury. However, it is also important to learn some basic prevention techniques to minimize the chance of injury.

**Make sure to warm-up and stretch before engaging in physical activity.** The most common way to prevent injury is to get the blood flowing and stretch out muscles before playing sports or being active. Muscles are more elastic with better blood flow and when they have been stretched out, you are less likely to get cramps or discomfort. Try jumping rope or doing jumping jacks before beginning your stretches to maximize muscle elasticity.

**Hydrate before, during, and after any activity.** Like stretching, hydration is one of the most common and important forms of injury prevention when it comes to physical activity. Especially in the warmer months, our bodies quickly dehydrate due to sweating. Muscles use fluids and electrolytes to function properly, so even if someone does stretch before being active, dehydration may still cause muscle sprains and strains. Always carry a bottle of water when exercising.

**Wear proper footwear and equipment.** Wearing the wrong shoes can be the surest way to sprain an ankle depending on the intensity of a workout. When running, make sure footwear provides ankles and soles with the support needed. And when walking or hiking, make sure the shoes are up for the task.

For those who have existing joint pains, wearing a brace when being active can ease discomfort and help prevent further damage to joints.

**Condition for summertime activity.** Many spend the winter months less active than during the rest of the year—meaning that jumping into a warm weather exercise routine can cause unnecessary strain on muscles and joints. Therefore, make sure to ease into regular physical activity. Trying to do too much too soon often results in otherwise avoidable injuries.

**And most importantly, those who are active during the summer months must know their limits.** Summer is the best time to be outside, but because of the bright sun, heat, and oftentimes, humidity, our bodies can get tired, dehydrated, and overheated very easily. There is no shame in ending a workout early or sitting a few plays out during a game. Not paying attention to the signs our bodies are telling us is a surefire way to cause harm.

By listening to our bodies, injuries that can take weeks or even months of recovery can be easily avoided. High-intensity physical activity – such as competitive sports, running, or cycling – can

put a lot of strain on joints and muscles and increase the likelihood of an injury. The possibility of sports-related injury can never be eliminated, but following these basic guidelines will improve your chances of having a healthy and active summer.