

Physiotherapy in Sports Injuries

The disappointment and frustration of being sidelined through injury, the agony of hurting your back by simply bending in the garden or twisting a knee or elbow just playing with the kids. It doesn't matter whether it comes from the sporting arena or the backyard stadium. The fact is, it hurts! And you want to know, "How can I get back to normal and back on the field or the court, as quickly as possible?"

If you happen to be sidelined by a sports injury, a fall, or injury to joints or muscles you're likely to be suffering from either one or a combination of the following signs and symptoms:

- Bruising
- Inflammation
- Swelling or Oedema
- Restriction of Movement
- Pain

Common Types of Sports Injuries

- Muscle sprains and strains
- Tears of the ligaments that hold joints together
- Tears of the tendons that support joints and allow them to move
- Dislocated joints

Poor training practices, improper equipment, lack of conditioning, or insufficient warm-up and stretching during workouts can cause most of these injuries.

The service providers can be contacted at:

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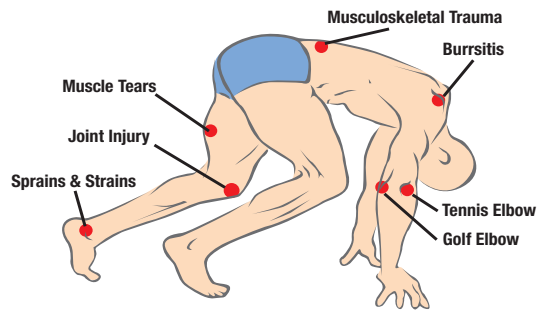


Giving Your Body a Sporting Chance!



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Areas Likely to be Affected



Getting to the Point

Your body basically has the capacity to 'manufacture' its own natural painkillers, natural anti-inflammatory and anti-stress hormones. Early physiotherapy stimulates your body to get that production line moving, thus releasing those natural, in-built body chemical healers, giving you a less pain and more gain sensation. And the ability to get back into the game faster. The fact is, the sooner your physiotherapy treatment of these injuries is started, the less time you'll need to be sitting on the sidelines.

How Does Physiotherapy Help?

Physiotherapy works in the following ways to help you bounce back into action:

- Lessening the effect of bruising.
- Reducing the swelling, inflammation and pain using ice or ultrasound.
- Increasing the range of movement of the affected joint whether it's fingers, feet, knees, hips, back, neck or shoulders.
- Decreasing muscle spasm and dispersing the tightness in muscles.
- Reducing pain quite substantially with each treatment by breaking the pain/spasm cycle.
- Cutting healing time dramatically by improving blood supply to the affected area and dispersing oedema or swelling.
- Strengthening affected and surrounding muscle groups.

Physiotherapists use a wide range of techniques to treat sporting injuries. Ultrasound, cold packs, deep tendon friction, graded exercises and stretching are some of the techniques done and a supportive splint or brace may be provided. Sports massage can also provide an extra aid in healing when used in conjunction with physiotherapy.

As a general rule treatment of sporting type injuries relies on the **R.I.C.E.** principle; which stands for:

- **Rest.** Reduce regular exercise or activities of daily living as needed. If you cannot put weight on an ankle or knee, crutches/ a cane may help.
- **Ice.** Apply an ice pack to the injured area for 20 minutes at a time, four to eight times a day. (cold pack, ice bag, or plastic bag)
- **Compression.** Compression of the injured area may help reduce swelling. Compression can be achieved with elastic wraps, special boots, air-cast braces, and splints.
- **Elevation.** If possible, keep the injured ankle, knee, elbow, or wrist elevated on a pillow, above the level of the heart, to help decrease swelling.

This will help reduce the swelling, inflammation and bruising associated with these injuries.

What Should I Do if I Suffer an Injury?

Whether an injury is acute or chronic, there is never a good reason to try to "work through" the pain of an injury. When you have pain from a particular movement or activity, STOP!

Continuing the activity only causes further harm. Some injuries require prompt medical attention while others can be self-treated.

When to Seek Medical Treatment?

You should call your doctor if:

- The injury causes severe pain, swelling, or numbness.
- You can't tolerate any weight on the area.
- The pain or dull ache of an old injury is accompanied by increased swelling or joint abnormality or instability.

Depending on the severity of your injury or the likelihood that your injury may cause long-term problems, you may have to see:

- **Orthopaedic surgeon:** A doctor specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of the musculoskeletal system, which includes bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles, and nerves.
- **Physiotherapist:** A health care professional who will help you with an exercise and rehabilitation program. Your primary care physician may refer you to a physiotherapist after you begin to recover from your injury to help strengthen muscles and joints and prevent further injury.

When and How to Treat at Home?

If you don't have any of the above symptoms, it's probably safe to treat the injury at home – at least at first. Use the **RICE** method to relieve pain and inflammation and speed healing. Follow these four steps immediately after injury and continue for at least 48 hours.

Tips for Preventing Injury

Whether you've never had a sports injury and you're trying to keep it that way or you've had an injury and don't want another, the following tips can help:

- Avoid bending knees past 90 degrees when doing half knee bends.
- Avoid twisting knees by keeping feet as flat as possible during stretches.
- When jumping, land with your knees bent.
- Do warm up exercises not just before vigorous activities like running, but also before less vigorous ones such as golf.
- Don't overdo.
- Do warm up stretches before activity. Stretch the Achilles tendon, hamstring, and quadriceps areas and hold the positions. Don't bounce.
- Wear shoes of a proper fit that provide shock absorption and stability.
- Cool down following vigorous sports. For example, after a race, walk or walk/jog for five minutes so your pulse comes down gradually.