

Personal Training by Robert J. Bovee

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Overuse vs. Traumatic Injuries

An athlete encounters injuries that are caused by either an acute trauma or overuse. The traumatic injury is violent and sudden, such as sprains, lacerations, torn ligaments, pulled muscles, or bones broken by a fall. Immediate professional treatment is usually required. The injury should be examined if there is immediate swelling, pain, inability of the injured body part to be used, or severe pain that lasts for 30 to 40 minutes or more. If you hear or feel a crack, tear, or pop and there is persisting pain, you should seek professional help right away.

Overuse injuries are more common and develop over a long period of time due to mild or low-grade, repeated stress. Overtraining results in overuse injuries. This kind of injury is sometimes also associated with anatomical variations, such as flat or high arches, or an abnormally sized or positioned kneecap. The knees (i.e. Iliotibial Band Syndrome, Runner's Knee) and the Achilles tendon (i.e. Tendonitis) are affected the worst by overtraining. The pain from overuse injuries is normally not severe and is often ignored by the athlete. Whether or not professional help is required is more difficult to determine when the injury stems from overuse. A medical professional should be seen if the following self-care treatments do not make the pain subside within ten to fourteen * days: ice and heat, decreased level of activity, stretching, and aspirin or ibuprofen.

Overuse injuries may be due to biomechanical problems created by anatomical variations, such as flat or high arches. More than half of all overuse injuries are due to training errors. For runners, the body is stressed by each run, so daily high intensity training does not allow the body adequate time to adjust and recover. An imbalance of heavy and light workouts can also lead to an overuse injury.

There are several recommended self-care treatments. Cut your mileage back for seven to ten days. Do not run through the pain. Reevaluate your training habits. If the pain is severe from the outset of your activity, stop the activity completely. If it subsides during the activity and does not return until a couple hours later, decrease the level of activity. Consider doing some other form of aerobic exercise to maintain your cardiovascular fitness. Inflammation should be treated with ice after the activity and aspirin or ibuprofen throughout the day. Encourage healing with a whirlpool, massage or ice and heat therapy.

To prevent overuse injuries, understand the long term effects of the exercise program you are working on. Know how it will affect your bones, joints and muscles. Add a conditioning program with stretching, strengthening and crosstraining exercises into your exercise regimen. Wearing the proper shoes and socks will also aid in injury prevention.

For more information, please contact Robert J. Bovee at (585) 330-0614.
