

# There's no gain from pain

*Stay active with safe sports practices and proper medical care*

**W**e all know that regular exercise is an essential part of a healthy lifestyle. Exercise makes you look good and feel good – promoting greater muscle strength, endurance and flexibility, weight control, and cardiovascular fitness.

However, too much of a good thing can lead to an injury that can sideline you from the activities you enjoy. You don't have to be a competitive athlete to get a sports injury, which is simply an injury that commonly occurs during sports or exercise. A sports injury can happen to anyone at any age; although they are more common as we grow older, and more often occur among women, due to differences in body structure.

Sports injuries can involve any part of the body,

but generally refer to an injury that involves the muscles, bones or a connective tissue, like cartilage. These types of injuries usually come about from improper training or conditioning, insufficient warm-up and stretching before an activity, using the wrong equipment, or doing too much, too fast.

Sports injuries fall into two primary categories: acute and chronic. An acute injury involves an active event that causes trauma, such as a fall or a collision. A chronic injury happens gradually, through repetitive motions and cumulative strain on the musculoskeletal system.

Prompt treatment of both acute and chronic injuries is important in avoiding further injury. Chronic injuries left untreated or not allowed to fully heal can lead to repeat injuries, or develop into more serious long-term problems, such as osteoarthritis.

It's important to distinguish muscle soreness from injury in deciding

whether to seek medical help. The traditional credo of rest, ice, compression and elevation is effective for home care. However, if you've tried these steps immediately after injury and regularly for 48 hours, and pain and swelling do not improve, contact your doctor. Signs that your injury needs medical attention include severe pain, swelling or numbness; inability to put weight on the area; or new pain in the site of an old injury, accompanied by increased swelling, or an abnormal appearance.

If you suspect you've sustained a sports injury, a good place to start is with your primary care provider. He or she may consult with a sports medicine specialist to help with diagnosis and treatment. Depending on your injury, you may receive care from an orthopedic doctor or a rehabilitative therapist. An orthopedic doctor specializes in diagnosis and treatment of the musculoskeletal system; a physical therapist works in partnership with your doctor to rehabilitate your injury – designing a specialized treatment plan to make the injured area stronger, more flexible and less susceptible to future injuries.

Treating a sports injury is gradual. Getting the area moving again is the first step to help speed healing. Rehabilitation is based on a progression of activities to

help build flexibility, endurance and strength; as well as proper balance and body mechanics. In addition to exercise, your therapy may include electrostimulation (mild electrical current to reduce pain and swelling and increase muscle strength), cryotherapy (ice packs to limit blood flow to injured tissues), heat, ultrasound and massage.

Benefits of rehabilitative therapy include restoration of function; less pain; improved range of motion; a quicker return to sports and recreation; better health, strength, movement and safety; muscle strengthening and coordination.

For the treatment to be successful, however, patients have some responsibilities, as well. "First and foremost, you need to come to your therapy sessions motivated and with a positive attitude," says Michael Cibulka, P.T., O.C.S., spokesperson for the American Physical Therapy Association. "Coming to your therapy sessions in an optimistic state of mind will almost always set the stage for faster, steadier progress."

Cibulka offers the following suggestions to help you get the most from physical therapy:

Come prepared to work hard but not to feel pain. "It's not 'no pain, no gain;' it's 'no fatigue, no gain,'" says Cibulka. "To gain strength, you have to move a muscle to a point where it's fatigued, but not to a point where it hurts." Communicate with your therapist. Not telling your

therapist if something hurts or if you're unable to do a certain exercise at home, can delay your progress and recovery. "You also should have an idea of how many sessions you'll need and how your progress will be measured," says Cibulka. "Asking for progress reports as time goes by can help you stay focused."

Understand your treatment options. In some cases, your therapist will have several possible treatment options, and you should understand what they are, the pros and cons of each and the risks. For example, your therapist may be able to work with you at a slow, easy pace until you recover. But by taking a more aggressive pace, you may be able to recover in half the time. You need to be aware of the risks, such as an increase in pain that could slow or stop your recovery.

Ask why you do the exercises you do. Understanding what the exercises should accomplish can help motivate you to stick with them. "Someone who has been bedridden will be asked to do a simple exercise like moving their foot up and down," relates Cibulka. "Unless they are told that doing this motion can help prevent blood clots, the person might not have the motivation to do it."

Do the exercises you've been asked to do at home. If you meet with your therapist only a few times a week, it's essential you do exercises at home to make progress.

**Continued on Page 7**



MICHAEL  
HIMMELMAN,  
PT MS

**Continued from Page 6**

res.com/rehab to learn more.

Know what to expect after a therapy session. Asking how you might expect to feel one, two or 24 hours after a therapy session can ease your mind. "After the first few sessions, ask your therapist if swelling, pain or stiffness is normal and what you should do if it develops," says Cibulka. "In most cases, some soreness is expected, and applying ice or heat can bring relief."

For tips on safe exercise, preventing or treating a sports injury, contact the Rehabilitation Department at Scenic Mountain Medical Center at (432)268-4756 or visit them on the web at [www.smmcca.com](http://www.smmcca.com)

*Michael Himmelman is a Physical Therapist and the Director of Rehabilitation Services at Scenic Mountain Medical Center (SMMC). He has extensive experience and expertise in orthopedics, sports medicine, and the post operative patient. The community is invited to meet Michael and the rest of the talented members of the SMMC Rehab Team at a Welcome Reception and Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony Thursday, March 4th from 4:30 to 6 p.m. in the First Floor Classroom at SMMC. Refreshments will be provided.*

## Play it Safe

Practicing smart sports and exercise habits can prevent an injury on the front end. The National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases recommends the following techniques to avoid injury:

- When doing knee bends, don't bend your knees more than halfway.
- Don't twist your knees when you stretch; keep your feet flat.
- When jumping, land with your knees bent.
- Do warm-up exercises before playing any sport.
- Always stretch before you play or exercise.
- Cool down after hard sports or workouts.
- Wear shoes that fit properly, are stable and absorb shock.
- Exercise on soft surfaces; don't run on asphalt or concrete.
- Run on flat surfaces.
- Don't be a weekend warrior, i.e., engaging in a week's worth of activity in a day or two.
- Learn to do your sport right. Use proper form to reduce your risk of "overuse" injuries.
- Use the appropriate safety gear for the sport you are playing.
- Build up your exercise level gradually. Know your body's limits.