

TOP 5 SPORTS INJURIES

The young and fit do not need to worry about sports injuries, right? Wrong. In fact, the people who are most vulnerable are teenagers and young adults who take part in contact sports like rugby. **Wong Sher Maine** tells you how to spot, treat and prevent sports injuries.



KNEE INJURIES such as ligament tears are common among sportsmen such as soccer players.

PHOTO: TERENCE TAN

► Overuse injuries

Cause: Over-exertion and sometimes chronic repetitive actions. Pushing the body too hard when it is not ready for that level of exercise.

Whom it affects: Those who have stopped exercising for a long time and think they can pick up from where they left off, such as men who only train for their annual army IPPT.

Symptoms: Pain in various parts of the body, from the back to the knee to ankles.

Treatment: As it is not a very serious condition, treatment ranges from tailoring the level of exercise accordingly to giving drugs for pain relief or inflammation.

Precautions: With exercise, always start slow and gradually progress.



► Sprains

Cause: Ligaments in the ankle, knee, wrist or elbow are stretched or torn. Ankle sprains are particularly common.

Whom it affects: Teenagers and young adults involved in contact or extreme sports.

Symptoms: Acute pain. Unlike overuse injuries, where the point of when the pain started may not be remembered, people will know when they have a sprain. Besides pain, there may be swelling and bruising.

Treatment: Application of ice, compression and elevation for ankle sprains. For very bad sprains, physiotherapy and surgery to reconstruct the ligament may be required.

Precautions: Proper warm-ups. An ankle guard can help to prevent ankle sprains.

► Shoulder dislocation

Cause: As the shoulder joint is inherently unstable — like a golf ball sitting on its tee — it is easily dislocated by falls.



Whom it affects: Younger sportsmen. The more often the shoulder has been dislocated, the higher the chances of a recurrence.

Symptoms: Pain and deformity, unless the shoulder has been dislocated so many times that there is no longer any pain.

Treatment: Physiotherapy, to strengthen the muscles around the shoulder joint so that the bone is kept in place. For those whose shoulders keep dislocating, surgery may be required to repair the tissues around the shoulder joint.

Precautions: Keeping the shoulder and upper back muscles strong may help to prevent some dislocations.

► Patellofemoral pain syndrome

Cause: Unknown though it could be due to softening of the kneecap cartilage.

Whom it affects: Usually those under 35.

Symptoms: A chronic, nagging pain usually in the front of the knee.

Treatment: Therapy to strengthen the thigh muscles usually helps to alleviate the pain.

Precautions: Doing adequate warm-ups before doing sports.

► Knee injuries

The knee is a complicated joint and the ligaments, cartilage and meniscus found in the knee are all susceptible to injury, much more so for those who play contact sports.

Ligament tears of the knee

Cause: Tears of the anterior cruciate ligament (on the inside of the knee joint) are very serious.

Whom it affects: Teenagers and young adults who are actively involved in contact sports and pro-

fessional sportsmen.

Symptoms: Pain, swelling of the knee, internal bleeding within the knee joint, inability to bear weight on the knee for a few days to a few weeks. The knee may even become wobbly and unstable.

Treatment: Doctors would need to control the swelling as it would restrict the full range of movement of the knee. Physiotherapy is used to regain range of motion, control swelling and strengthen the muscles.

Reconstructive surgery for the ligament may be necessary.

Precautions: None.



Meniscal injuries of the knee

Cause: The meniscus, or the cushion within the knee which helps distribute loads, is torn.

Whom it affects: Those who play sports and those in their late 30s and above.

Symptoms: Pain, occasional swelling of the knee. There may be an increased risk of arthritis.

Treatment: Surgery may be needed to unlock the knee if the leg cannot be straightened.

Precautions: None.

Cartilage injuries of the knee

Cause: The cartilage at the knee can be damaged if there is some trauma to the knee, for instance, hitting the ground.

Whom it affects: Younger sportsmen who are involved in higher intensity sports. It can also affect, say, a motorcyclist who falls off his bike onto his knee.

Symptoms: Pain and swelling of the knee.

Treatment: Some people do not require treatment and get better on their own. Others may require surgery.

Precautions: None.

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