



BetterSafe

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

Play it Safe!

Prevent Sports-Related Injuries

Exercising is good for you, but sometimes you can injure yourself when you play sports or exercise. Accidents, poor training practices, or improper gear can cause them. Some people get hurt because they are not in shape. Not warming up or stretching enough can also lead to injuries.

Prevention First

The best way to deal with sports injuries is to keep them from happening in the first place. Think of avoiding injury as just another part of playing by the rulebook. Knowing the rules of the game you're playing and using the right equipment can go a long way toward preventing injuries.

Types of Sports Injuries

Common reasons why we get injured playing sports include:

- not training or playing properly
- training too much
- not wearing the right footwear
- not wearing the right safety equipment

There are two kinds of sports injuries:

1. **Acute traumatic injuries** are things like fractures, sprains and strains, concussions, and cuts. They usually happen after a blow or force—like getting tackled in football or wiping out while skateboarding.
2. **Overuse injuries** include things like stress fractures and tendonitis. These injuries are also called **chronic injuries** because they happen over time, usually from repetitive training, like running, overhand throwing, or serving a ball in tennis. Overuse injuries can be just as damaging as acute injuries, even though they might not seem serious at first. If they're not treated, they usually get worse.

What To Do

If you get hurt, stop playing. Continuing to play or exercise can cause more harm. Treatment often begins with the RICE (Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation) method to relieve pain, reduce swelling, and speed healing. Other possible treatments include pain relievers, keeping the injured area from moving, rehabilitation, and sometimes surgery.

Next Page
↓



BetterSafe

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

Continued from previous page

Call a doctor when:

- pain is very bad
- pain is worse when you're active
- the injured area is swollen
- you're limping
- your range of motion is limited
- pain continues for a while, gets worse at times, or lasts for a week or more following an injury

Avoiding Running Injuries

Running is a popular activity for many. And it's also an activity where many get injured. Up to half of all runners are injured every year, so the odds are good that at some point in your running career you will get injured.

Running, especially on asphalt or other hard surfaces, puts a lot of stress on the legs and back. This can lead to lots of different problems. The most common running injuries include sprained ankles, blisters, tendonitis, chondromalacia (runner's knee), iliotibial band (ITB) syndrome, heel pain, and shin splints.

Two steps can help you avoid serious injuries from running:

1. **Try to prevent injuries from happening in the first place.** Use the right gear, warm up your muscles before you start, and take precautions to deal with weather conditions—like staying well hydrated in hot weather and keeping muscles warm in the cold.
2. **Stop running as soon as you notice signs of trouble.** Ignoring the warning signs of an injury will only lead to bigger problems down the road.

Gear Guidelines

Running might require less gear than other sports, but it is still vitally important to get the right equipment to minimize the stresses it puts on your body. Anyone who has ever run in the wrong shoes can tell you what a painful experience it can be, and anyone who has run in the wrong socks probably has blisters to prove it.

Here are a few tips to make sure you get the right footwear before you start running:

Before you buy a pair of running sneakers, know what sort of foot you have. Are your feet wide or narrow? Do you have flat feet? High arches? Different feet need different sneakers to provide maximum support and comfort. If you don't know what sort of foot you have or what kind of sneaker will work best for you, consult a trained professional at a running specialty store.

If you plan on running on trails or in bad weather, you'll need trail-running shoes with extra traction, stability, and durability. Whichever type of shoes you end up purchasing, make sure they are laced up snugly so they're comfortable but not so tight that they cause discomfort.





Day In Day Out

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

Feeling Stressed?

Stress Relief Might Help Your Health

Everyone feels stressed from time to time. Stress can give you a rush of energy when it's needed most—for instance, competing in sports, working on an important project, or facing a dangerous situation. The hormones and other chemicals released when under stress prepare you for action. You breathe faster, your heartbeat quickens, blood sugar rises to give you energy, and your brain uses more oxygen as it shifts into high alert.

But if stress lasts a long time—a condition known as chronic stress—those “high-alert” changes become harmful rather than helpful. “Stress clearly promotes higher levels of inflammation, which is thought to contribute to many diseases of aging. Inflammation has been linked to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, arthritis, frailty, and functional decline,” says Dr. Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, a leading stress researcher at Ohio State University. She and other researchers have found that stress affects the body's

immune system, which then weakens your response to vaccines and impairs wound healing.

What Science Says about Stress

Research has linked chronic stress to digestive disorders, urinary problems, headaches, sleep difficulties, depression, and anxiety.

according to a 2013 survey from the American Psychological Association. Stress can also arise from major life changes, such as the death of a loved one, divorce, illness, or losing a job. Traumatic stress is brought on by an extreme event such as a major accident, exposure to violence, or a natural disaster such as a hurricane or flood.

Caring for a person with severe illness—such as dementia or cancer—can also be a significant source of stress. More than a decade ago, studies by Kiecolt-Glaser

Stress clearly promotes higher levels of inflammation, which is thought to contribute to many diseases of aging.

“Some studies have found the physical, emotional, and social effects of a disease like cancer to be stressful for patients, caregivers, and long-term cancer survivors,” says NIH's Dr. Paige Green McDonald, an expert on stress and cancer biology. “However, there's no definitive evidence

that stress causes cancer or is associated with how long one survives after a cancer diagnosis.”

The top causes of stress in the U.S. are money and work-related pressures,



Next Page
↓



Day In Day Out

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

Continued from previous page

and others showed that the stressful demands placed on caregivers can lead to poorer health, lower responses to vaccines, increased inflammation, and a more than 60% higher death rate compared to non-caregivers.

It's not clear why some people can sidestep or recover more quickly from stress than others. These resilient people seem to "bounce back" more easily after stressful situations. Recent studies of animals suggest that resiliency may depend at least in part on our genes. But learning healthy ways to cope with stress can also boost your resilience.

You may think that the agitation brought on by stress might help to burn

calories. But evidence hints that the opposite is more likely. Kiecolt-Glaser and colleagues found that, compared to nonstressed people, those who were stressed burned fewer calories after high-fat meals and they produced more of the hormone insulin, which enhances fat storage. "So stress may contribute to weight gain and obesity through these biological routes," Kiecolt-Glaser adds.

Getting enough sleep is also key to resilience and stress relief—although stress itself can interfere with sleep. To improve your sleep habits, go to bed the same time each night and get up the same time each morning, and limit the use of light-emitting electronics like computers and smartphones before bed.

The light can reduce production of a natural sleep hormone called melatonin, which then makes it hard to fall asleep.

Beyond recommendations for exercise, healthy diet, social contacts, and getting enough sleep, Green McDonald says, "studies have also shown that mindfulness (focused attention on one's own emotions) and other meditative practices can effectively relieve stress."

If you feel overwhelmed by stress, talk with a health care provider or mental health professional. Medications or other therapies might help you cope. In the long run, reducing stress may help you to slow down and enjoy your time with the people and activities you really care about.

TO REDUCE STRESS

- **Get enough sleep.**
- **Exercise regularly.** Just 30 minutes a day of walking can boost mood and reduce stress.
- **Build a social support network.**
- **Set priorities.** Decide what must get done and what can wait. Say no to new tasks if they are putting you into overload.
- **Think positive.** Note what you've accomplished at the end of the day, not what you've failed to do.
- **Try relaxation methods.** Mindfulness, meditation, yoga, or tai chi may help.
- **Seek help.** Talk to a mental health professional if you feel unable to cope, have suicidal thoughts, or use drugs or alcohol to cope.





TakeCharge

WELCOA'S ONLINE SELF-CARE BULLETIN



Don't Let Back Pain Knock You Flat When Your Back Hurts

Is your back hurting? You're in good company. In any 3-month period, about 1 in 4 adults in the U.S. has at least one day of back pain, mostly in the lower back.

The back is a complicated structure. Its center is the spine, which is made up of 33 bones called vertebrae, stacked in a column. The nerves of the spinal cord run in a tunnel through the middle of those bones. Spongy discs between the vertebrae act as cushions. Ligaments and tendons hold everything together.

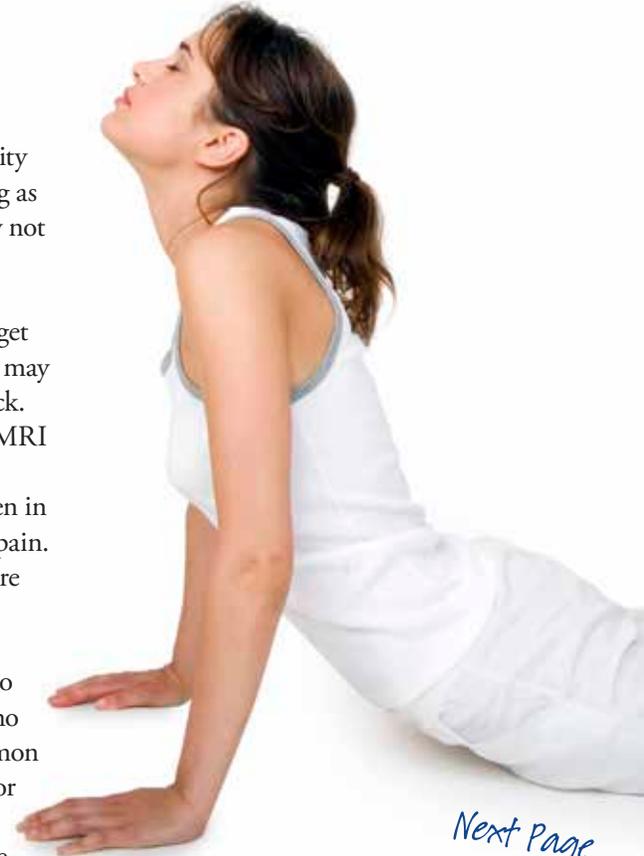
What Causes Back Pain?

A lot of things can go wrong with your back. A strained muscle or a problem with a disc or a bone can cause pain. Back pain might also arise from a fracture or tumor. Much of the time, though, it's impossible to tell what's making your back hurt.

"We rarely find out exactly what it is," says Dr. Gunnar Andersson, an orthopedic surgeon at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. "As long as it stays as back pain, we are typically not that concerned."

Your back naturally changes as you get older. Discs degenerate and arthritis may develop in the small joints of the back. Those changes may show up on an MRI or other types of imaging scans. But such changes to the back are also seen in a lot of people who don't have back pain. So it's hard to know if the changes are actually what's causing the pain.

People with obesity are more likely to have low back pain, as are people who smoke. Back pain is also more common in people who don't exercise much, or in people who are mostly inactive but have occasional bursts of exercise.



Next Page
↓



TakeCharge

WELCOA'S ONLINE SELF-CARE BULLETIN

Continued from previous page

Back Pain Treatment

The good news is most back pain goes away by itself. For a new pain in the back, Andersson says he usually advises taking over-the-counter medications for the pain and staying away from activity that is hard on the back—lifting, carrying, bending, and twisting. “Then, wait for the problem to disappear, which it will in the great majority of people over a few weeks,” he says.

But for some people, the pain continues. If your back hurts most of the time for more than 3 months, you have chronic back pain.

What doctors do about chronic pain depends on the source of the pain. If it comes from a fracture or tumor, those problems

can be treated. Surgery can help if the pain is caused by a ruptured (herniated) disc or certain other conditions like spinal stenosis (narrowing of the spinal column, which can put pressure on the nerves) or degenerative spondylolisthesis (when one vertebra slips over another). But surgery isn't the right choice for everyone.

For most people, even chronic pain eventually clears up without surgery. The most important thing, Andersson says, is not to let the pain take over. Research has shown that patients who stay active are better off. Just be sure to avoid activities that might strain the back. “It's important not to succumb to the pain and become afraid of moving,” Andersson says. “It doesn't seem to make much difference what you do, as long as you stay active.”

For a Healthier Back

- Stay active and maintain a healthy weight.
- Stretch before exercise or other strenuous physical activity.
- Don't slouch when standing or sitting.
- Make sure your work surface is at a comfortable height for you.
- Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes.
- If you must lift something heavy, don't bend over the item; instead, keep your back straight, bend at the knees, and lift by putting the stress on your legs and hips.
- Talk with a health care provider to make sure you're getting enough calcium and vitamin D.
- Don't smoke.





To Your Health

WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN

The Skinny on Supplements

The majority of adults in the United States take one or more dietary supplements either every day or occasionally. Today's dietary supplements include vitamins, minerals, herbals and botanicals, amino acids, enzymes, and many other products. Dietary supplements come in a variety of forms: traditional tablets, capsules, and powders, as well as drinks and energy bars. Popular supplements include vitamins D and E; minerals like calcium and iron; herbs such as echinacea and garlic; and specialty products like glucosamine, probiotics, and fish oils.

The Dietary Supplement Label

All products labeled as a dietary supplement carry a Supplement Facts panel that lists the contents, amount of active ingredients per serving, and other added ingredients (like fillers, binders, and flavorings). The manufacturer suggests the serving size, but you or your health care provider might decide that a different amount is more appropriate for you.

Are Supplements Effective?

If you don't eat a nutritious variety of foods, some supplements might help you get adequate amounts of essential

nutrients. However, supplements can't take the place of the variety of foods that are important to a healthy diet.

Scientific evidence shows that some dietary supplements are beneficial for overall health and for managing some health conditions. For example, calcium and vitamin D are important for keeping bones strong and reducing bone loss; folic acid decreases the risk of certain birth defects; and omega-3 fatty acids from fish oils might help some people with heart disease. Other supplements need more study to determine their value. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not determine whether dietary supplements are effective before they are marketed.

Safety and Risk

Many supplements contain active ingredients that can have strong effects in the body. Always be alert to the possibility of unexpected side effects, especially when taking a new product.

Supplements are most likely to cause side effects or harm when people take them instead of prescribed medicines or when people take many supplements in combination. Some

Next Page
↓



To Your Health

WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN

Continued from previous page

supplements can increase the risk of bleeding or, if a person takes them before or after surgery, they can affect the person's response to anesthesia. Dietary supplements can also interact with certain prescription drugs in ways that might cause problems.

Keep in mind that some ingredients found in dietary supplements are added to a growing number of foods, including breakfast cereals and beverages. As a result, you may be getting more of these ingredients than you think, and more might not be better. Taking more than you need is always more expensive and can also raise your risk of experiencing side effects. For example, getting too much vitamin A can cause headaches and liver damage, reduce bone strength, and cause birth defects. Excess iron causes nausea and vomiting and may damage the liver and other organs.

Be cautious about taking dietary supplements if you are pregnant or nursing. Also, be careful about giving them (beyond a basic multivitamin/mineral product) to a child. Most dietary supplements have not been well tested for safety in pregnant women, nursing mothers, or children.

Quality

Dietary supplements are complex products. The FDA has established quality standards for dietary supplements to help ensure their identity, purity, strength, and composition. These standards are designed to prevent the inclusion of the wrong ingredient, the addition of too much or too little of an ingredient, the possibility of contamination, and the improper packaging and labeling of a product. The FDA periodically inspects facilities that manufacture dietary supplements.

Keep in Mind

Don't decide to take dietary supplements to treat a health condition that you have diagnosed yourself, without consulting a health care provider.

- Don't take supplements in place of, or in combination with, prescribed medications without your health care provider's approval.
- Check with your health care provider about the supplements you take if you are scheduled to have any type of surgical procedure.
- The term "natural" doesn't always mean safe. A supplement's safety depends on many things, such as its chemical makeup, how it works in the body, how it is prepared, and the dose used. Certain herbs (for example, comfrey and kava) can harm the liver.

- Before taking a dietary supplement, ask yourself these questions:

- › What are the potential health benefits of this dietary supplement product?
- › What are its potential benefits for me?
- › Does this product have any safety risks?
- › What is the proper dose to take?
- › How, when, and for how long should I take it?

If you don't know the answers to these questions, use the information sources listed in this brochure and talk to your health care providers.

