

## What You Should Know About Common Overuse Injuries

Many of the common injuries associated with repetitive activities can be avoided through regular conditioning exercises and the use of proper equipment. These injuries are mostly the result of poor strength and flexibility in the muscles of people whose jobs or recreational activities require repetitive actions. A summary of the most common types of overuse injuries, how to treat them, and how to avoid and rehabilitate them is provided.

**Shoulder Tendonitis** is the result of inflammation in the rotator cuff muscles of the shoulder. Overuse of this muscle group can lead to small tears in muscle fibers or tendons resulting in pain and limited motion. Generally shoulder tendonitis responds favorably to anti-inflammatory medications and ice. Specific rotator cuff strengthening is also prescribed to promote blood flow, strength, and endurance of the muscle group.

**Tennis Elbow** is pain on the outside portion of the elbow caused by partial tears in the muscle and tendon connecting the forearm muscle to the elbow bone. Ice, anti-inflammatory meds, and the use of a counterforce strap help in reducing the pain. To avoid re-injury, specific flexibility and strengthening exercises are prescribed.

**Hamstring Pulls** involve tears in muscle fibers or tendons of the hamstring muscles along the back of the thigh. Ice and anti-inflammatory meds assist in managing the initial trauma. To avoid re-injury, specific flexibility and strengthening exercises are prescribed.

**Quadriceps Strains** involve pain and tightness in the muscles along the front of the thigh. There can be an occasional loss of motion if the injury is severe, but can be avoided with proper stretching.

**Runner's Knee** is pain behind or around the knee cap. It is often a sign of inflammation of the patellar tendon caused by overuse of the quadriceps muscle and/or improper tracking of the knee cap in its groove. Local icing, hamstring stretching, quadriceps strengthening, and some taping procedures are used to combat the pain and inflammation.

**Shin Splints** are caused by inflammation or tiny tears in the muscles along the front of the lower leg. The repeated stresses of jogging and aerobic dance are often the cause of tenderness, and the symptoms will often subside with reduced levels of activity. Wearing good footwear is the first step in shin splint prevention, followed by proper stretching of the Achilles tendon and plantar fascia.

**Iliotibial Band Pain** is a burning sensation in the area just below the outside of the knee due to inflammation of the iliotibial band, which helps support and stabilize the knee. Changes in running environments, proper shoes, and optimum flexibility of the IT band will help prevent this injury from becoming debilitating.

**Sprained Ankles** are pulled or torn ligaments often caused by rolling or twisting the foot to the inside. Ice, compression, and elevation are used initially to manage swelling. As the swelling subsides, range of motion, flexibility, and strengthening exercises are prescribed.

**Achilles Tendonitis** is inflammation of the Achilles tendon just above the heel. The condition is often the result of poor flexibility and weakness of the calf muscles. Proper stretching before and after activities, along with a properly fitted heel lift in the shoe usually helps minimize the effects of this injury.

Should you experience any one of these injuries, a functional restoration rehabilitation protocol is the only scientifically proven method to effectively treat these conditions. In addition, the preventative exercise prescription needs to be specific and taught by a therapist trained in functional restoration principles. Alternative methods have been clearly shown to be **ineffective**, resulting in a recurrence of symptoms and an overall waste of your valuable time.

Physical Therapy Specialists utilizes the functional restoration approach in the treatment of the many conditions affecting the neck, back, shoulder, elbow, hips, knees, and foot/ankle. In doing so, we have helped our patients achieve a greater than 93% success rate. We are the only facility in the eastern United States to offer our patients Active Spine Care™ as a treatment option for their back or neck condition. This method offers superior results over traditional therapy methods and has been subjected to the scrutiny of extensive scientific research.

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