

# Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

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## “Exercise Can Worsen Many Conditions”

Even though exercise has a wide array of health benefits, there are times when it is contraindicated. Although the benefits of exercise outweigh the risks, injuries are extremely common. You may have been told to “walk it off” if you were hurt on the field or on the court. If you happen to get hurt, the most important thing to do is stop exercising or playing sports and seek treatment. Continued exercising can exacerbate any potential pathology resulting from the initial injury. Injuries can occur due to poor training, improper gear, poor physical fitness, or failure to adequately warm up. Eighteen percent of adults reported having an athletic-related injury in the past year. Of all sports and exercises, running contributed the most injuries. Common types of athletic injury include: **Sprains**. These acute injuries are incredibly common during exercise. Sprains involve a stretch or tear of a ligament near a joint, such as the wrist, ankle, or knee. They may be mild or severe depending on whether the ligament was stretched or torn and effects weight-bearing on the affected joint. **Strains**. Unlike sprains, which affect ligaments, strains affect muscles. A strain happens when a muscle is overextended and becomes stretched or torn. Strains occur more commonly in cold weather, and symptoms include sudden pain followed by immediate limited range of motion. **Fractures**. Broken bones can occur in any sport. Bones in the wrist, hand, ankle, foot, and collarbone are the ones that are most commonly fractured in sports. **Dislocations**. Dislocations can present similarly to broken bones, with comparable acute symptoms. Dislocations that occur in athletics are often located in fingers or shoulders, but also occur in elbows, knees, and hips. **Rotator Cuff Injury**. This chronic injury typically occurs with repetitive actions of the shoulder, such as swimming, baseball, or tennis. Shoulder swelling is a common symptom, and pain occurs while lifting or when reaching behind the back. **Shin Splints**. The shin is defined as the anterior surface of the lower leg between the knee and ankle. This occurs when muscles and tendons around the shin become overused and inflamed. It usually goes away on rest. **Achilles Tendon Injury**. This occurs with a lot of running. Achilles tendinitis can be acute or chronic, and results in inflammation and pain in the heel or calf during walking or running. **Patellar Tendinitis**. Also known as jumper’s knee, occurs when the tendon connecting the patella to the tibia is injured or inflamed. Overweight people who play sports on a hard surface are at special risk.

In the America that I love, do not try to play through the pain. Prevention is key. Treatment for all requires the early implementation of the **RICE** (rest, ice, compression, elevation).

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