

Injury Report: Sprains and Strains are a Pain

Kids and adults love to be active. From a pickup game of basketball to a stand-up paddle session, there are many health benefits to recreational sports, but some risks – sprains and strains sideline more amateur athletes than any other injury.

Don't let your layup lay you up.

In the grand scheme of things, a sprain or a strain may not seem like a serious injury. But if you find yourself sidelined by one, it can be more than just an annoyance. Without proper treatment and recuperation, sprains and strains may become more than just a minor setback. That's why taking proper precautions for both preventing injuries or treating them properly if they occur is so important.



Among youth and recreational athletes, injuries can happen in about any sport. But basketball is one of the most common sports where they occur. According to recent data from the [Centers for Disease Control](#), more than 12 percent of all injuries among male athletes are related to basketball. This trailed only football (12 percent) and general exercise (almost 15 percent) among men.

“Basketball is a fast-paced game involving quick movements and change of direction,

and these activities can place the players at risk of sustaining ankle and knee injuries,” says [Dr. Michael G. Baraga](#), orthopaedics expert at the [University of Miami Sports Medicine Institute](#) and team physician for the University of Miami men’s and women’s basketball teams. “Hand and finger injuries tend to happen more commonly by jamming a finger with the ball.”

Injuries in Other Sports

Of course, basketball is far from the only recreational or youth sport where sprains and strains can occur. Recent injury data from the Centers for Disease Control noted injuries among both males and females in sports such as strength training, running, jogging, aerobics, cycling and others. “My practice involves mainly knee and shoulder injuries, with a heavy focus on knee ligament injuries, patellar or kneecap problems, meniscus injuries and cartilage injuries,” says Dr. Baraga. “A lot of these transcend specific sports. You can really get them during most sports and non-sports related accidents.”

Preventing strains and sprains

According to the [American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons](#), a sprain is when the ligaments, the bands of tissue that connect bones, stretch or tear. A strain is a similar injury, but it is related to the muscles or tendons. Many sprains or strains happen unexpectedly during recreational sports and can be difficult to prevent, but according to Dr. Baraga, there are precautions you can take.

“Fitness and preparation are key — there is a reason you see players on TV playing hard, falling hard, and just as easily getting up,” he says. “That speaks to the level of preparation they have put into their bodies to help prevent injuries through proper conditioning, strength training and flexibility.”

Proper Treatment

Of course, the fast-paced game of basketball can cause sprains or strains to occur even with good preparation. You may come down wrong on an ankle, for example, or plant your feet awkwardly as you get ready to jump. When injuries do occur, Dr. Baraga says taking the needed time off is key to proper recovery and preventing the injury from occurring again. The common approach to treating mild sprains and strains is RICE: Resting the injured body part, icing it for 20 minutes at a time as needed, compressing it with bandages and elevating the injured body part to reduce swelling.

“Most minor injuries should resolve relatively quickly in a couple of days,” says Dr. Baraga. “But if pain persists, you have difficulty moving or using the injured body part or simply feel something is not right, it’s best to be evaluated by a health care professional before getting back out to play and risking further damage.”

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