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Keeping Summer Sports Fun and Injury Free

Sports Medicine Specialist advises conditioning, moderation and a focus on core strength

GREENWICH, CT – According to Tim Greene, MD, sports medicine specialist at ONS (Orthopaedic and Neurosurgery Specialists), most athletic injuries are not the result of accidents but are due to inadequate preparation for a sports activity, overuse of joints or muscles and missing the early warning signs of injury. “Most sports injuries are preventable,” he says. “Many sports-related injuries can be traced to a lack of core body strength-- which is the strength of the muscles of the torso that keep your stomach strong and support your back. Think of the body as a tree that has strong branches but a weak trunk. That imbalance of strength can cause strain, cracking and even collapse the trunk. If your core is not strong and you engage in a running or jumping activity, you’re risk for injury is increased.” Dr. Greene recommends varying your activities so your body doesn’t become unevenly strengthened and conditioned. “Incorporating programs like yoga, Pilates, and strength training can be very effective for developing the body core and reducing the risk for injury.”

“Many people are more active in the summer than during the rest of the year,” says Dr. Greene. “When returning to a sports activity after taking time off, moderation is the key to avoiding injury. Your body is conditioned to do what it does most, so if you work seated in an office and take regular walks on weekends, the muscles you use in those activities are most conditioned. Whether you play tennis, golf, go bicycling or running, when you first return to a sport that you haven’t done for some time, you need to retrain those unconditioned muscles. Sports-specific muscle groups have to become stronger in order to support the balance and flexibility that are required for that activity. By gradually working into a

new activity, you condition your muscles without damaging them and your body will adjust to the new demands.”

Injury may also occur when people think they can “push through pain”. But pain may be a symptom of inflammation in the muscle, bone or even a hairline fracture. If you experience pain, it is safest to consult your physician or a sports medicine specialist to make sure you’re not over stressing a muscle or bone, which could develop into a more serious injury like a muscle tear or bone fracture. “If you listen to your body, don’t ignore early warning signs of overuse and develop your core strength, you’ll have a great summer of outdoor exercise and fun,” says Dr. Greene.

Tips for Preventing Injuries

- Listen to your body and know your risks.
- Warm-up and stretch at the start of every workout or sports activity.
- Women should be sure they are getting adequate calcium in their diet.
- Wear appropriate footgear and don’t wear worn out running or tennis shoes. Find a store where knowledgeable salespeople can advise you on appropriate footgear designed for women.
- When beginning a new sport or fitness program, start slowly and build up over time.
- Avoid sudden changes in intensity or type of exercise.
- Vary your fitness routine.
- If you feel persistent pain in your muscles or joints, stop exercising and have the pain evaluated.

Orthopaedic and Neurosurgery Specialists PC (ONS) is the largest multi-specialty orthopedic and neurosurgery practice in Fairfield and Westchester counties. ONS physicians provide expertise in sports medicine, minimally invasive orthopedic, spine and brain surgery, joint replacement and trauma. For more information, please visit www.onsmd.com.