Common Triathlon Treatment, Injuries, and Prevention

P.R.I.C.E. Treatment Method

P. Protect — Protect the injury from further harm by using a brace, splint, immobilizer, or ACE bandage.
R. Rest — Rest the injured area by not participating in activities that are painful to perform.
I. Ice — Ice the area for 20 minutes every 2 hours. Never use heat because it causes the area to swell even more.
C. Compression — Compress the swelling using an ACE bandage or compression wrap to limit any further swelling.
   When wrapping the injured area start at the furthest point away from the body and move toward the body. Be sure that you are not cutting off circulation.
E. Elevate — Elevate the injured area above the heart to pull blood flow away from the injured area.

COMMON INJURIES

Road Rash / Abrasions
Road rash is a common injury due to a fall where an area of skin is rubbed off. Even if you don’t see dirt, the scrape can get infected. Make sure to clean the area thoroughly.
- Wash your hands.
- Wash the cut thoroughly with mild soap and water.
- Large pieces of dirt or debris should be removed with tweezers.
- If available, apply antibiotic ointment.
- If a small scrape is likely to get rubbed or dirty, apply a non-adhesive bandage. Otherwise, let it air dry. Larger scrapes, or scrapes that bleed more, should be covered with a gauze bandage. Ice can help reduce swelling. Do not apply ice directly to the skin. See a doctor if the scrape is very large, contains debris deep inside or appears infected (warmth or red streaks at the injured site, pus, or a fever).

Knee Injuries / Tendinitis
Tendinitis is the inflammation, irritation and swelling of a tendon. It can occur as a result of injury, overuse, or aging as the tendon loses elasticity. Any action that places prolonged repetitive strain on the joints and muscles can cause tendinitis. The most common symptom is pain, tenderness and the increase of pain with movement.

Hand Numbness / Ulnar Neuropathy
This is a problem with the nerve that travels from the wrist to the shoulder, which leads to movement or sensation problems in the wrist or hand. Symptoms include numbness, tingling, burning, decreased sensation or weakness in the hand. The cause is generally from prolonged pressure on the handle bars.

Fractures
It’s hard to tell a dislocated bone from a broken bone, but the basic First Aid is the same. Symptoms include a visibly misshapen limb, swelling, intense pain, limited mobility, and numbness. Keep the person still and calm, contact your healthcare provider or 911 if the suspected broken bone is the back, neck, head, hip, pelvis or upper leg. Immobilize the injury, check for circulation beyond the fracture site and apply ice.

For more information, or to contact one of our Sports Medicine Outreach Liaisons, email us at SportsMedicine@amitahealth.org or call us at 224.273.2416

AMITAhealth.org/SportsMedicine
Swimmers Shoulder
Although most injuries occur due to the run and bike with lower-impact swimming being used for rehab, swimming itself can lead to injury. Swimming, especially freestyle, causes the shoulder to undergo repetitive overhead motion that may compromise microvasculature in the rotator cuff. This repeated micro trauma can result in the development of an inflammatory response and ultimately pain. This may even progress to symptoms of impingement in the rotator cuff. Symptoms usually are reported as pain at the shoulder during the late recovery phase and early catch phase of your stroke.

Lower Back Pain
The lower back is a common source of chronic pain among gymnasts. The cause of most lower back pain is related to muscle and ligament strain. The pain is usually resolved with rest, physical therapy or orthopedic treatment.

Sprains
A sprain is an injury to a ligament, the tough, fibrous tissue that connects bones to other bone. Ligament injuries involve a stretching or a tearing of this tissue. A sprain typically occurs when people fall and land on an outstretched arm, land on the side of their foot, or twist a knee with the foot planted firmly on the ground. This results in an over-stretch or tear of the ligament(s) supporting that joint. The usual signs and symptoms of a muscle sprain include pain, swelling, bruising, and the loss of functional ability (the ability to move and use the joint). Sometimes people feel a pop or tear when the injury happens. However, these signs and symptoms can vary in intensity, depending on the severity of the sprain.

Strains
A strain is an injury to either a muscle or a tendon, the tissue that connects muscles to bones. Depending on the severity of the injury, a strain may be a simple overstretch of the muscle or tendon, or it can result in a partial or complete tear. A strain is caused by twisting or pulling a muscle or tendon. Strains can be acute or chronic. An acute strain is caused by trauma or an injury such as a blow to the body; it can also be caused by improperly lifting heavy objects or overstressing the muscles. Chronic strains are usually the result of prolonged, repetitive movement of the muscles and tendons.

PREVENTION

Equipment & Technique
Proper saddle type, seat and handle bar height and position increase comfort, performance and reduce the risk of injury. Always wear protective gear such as a bike helmet, cycling shoes, gloves and clothing designed for cycling. A reliable cycling shop can assist you with proper equipment and bike fitting. Proper technique in all disciplines can also reduce the risk of injury.

Know The Road
Understanding the specific trail type and terrain on which you will be running and riding will help you avoid accidents or unnecessary stress for your riding ability.

Warming Up
Start by running and riding at a slower, more relaxed pace and gradually work up to full speed. As the level of activity increases, the muscles burn more oxygen and their temperature rises. When perspiration begins, the muscles are warmed up and ready for a workout.

Stretching
Stretch only after having warmed up; a cold muscle is more likely to tear when stretched. Stretching after a workout increases flexibility and reduces stress on joints. Perform stretches slowly, holding each position for at least five seconds.

Nutrition
Proper nutrition before and during your workout will help you maintain blood sugar levels and keep you adequately hydrated for peak performance. A doctor or physical therapist can assist you in developing a proper strength, flexibility and nutrition plan.