

FOOTNOTES 2002

N E W S Y O U C A N U S E

SUMMER 2002

Injuries Afflict Weekend Athletes

From pick-up basketball participants to over-the-hill softball players at the company picnic, weekend athletes are vulnerable to foot and ankle problems,

which account for 27 percent of all sports injuries. Overuse and insufficient stretching and warm-ups often cause such injuries.

Any sport that requires side-to-side motion, involves several participants in a confined area, or is played on uneven surfaces, presents a significant risk for foot and ankle injuries. An appointment with our office is advised for evaluation, diagnosis and treatment.

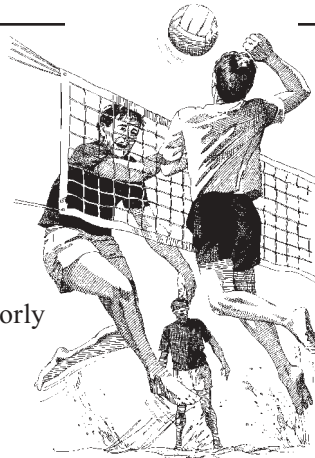
Here are some conditions our office frequently sees among weekend athletes.

Tendonitis occurs from overuse and is common among those who try to do too much too soon. While muscle pain is the result of the body's inability to control swelling, it isn't normal for tendons to swell. Tendonitis in the Achilles, ankle or foot, therefore, should be examined and treated without delay.

Pain in the Achilles tendon should be evaluated immediately. If the Achilles is strained or stretched, prompt evaluation could help prevent a possible rupture that would require surgery and a lengthy rehab.

Heel pain often results from stress from excessive athletic activity

and poorly designed footwear. Sufferers should decrease or eliminate strenuous



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What's Your Sport? Here's What to Watch For

Tennis: Quick stops and starts and lateral movements can cause ankle joints to become unstable, and Achilles tendon pain also is common among tennis players.

Softball: Sliding on the base paths can cause serious ankle sprains and fractures.

Basketball: On hard outdoor surfaces, players are vulnerable to ankle sprains, Achilles pain, stress fractures and heel pain.

Golf: Players who fail to stretch before a round can experience muscle pain from walking up and down hills and from climbing in and out of deep sand traps. Avid golfers also are at risk for neuromas and hallux rigidus, a jamming and deterioration of the big-toe joint.

Running: Injuries occur most frequently when runners fail to stretch and warm up and over do it when training for marathon races. Common foot and ankle problems for runners are heel pain, neuromas, tendonitis and stress fractures.

Lawnmowers & Feet Don't Mix!

Each year, some 25,000 Americans sustain injuries from power mowers, according to the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission. Although the number has declined with the adoption of federal safety standards, we still see far too many foot injuries from power lawnmowers.

Lawnmower blades whirl at 3000 revolutions per minute and produce three times the kinetic energy of a .357 handgun. Yet it isn't uncommon to see patients who have been hurt while operating a mower barefoot! Foot injuries range from dirty, infection-prone lacerations to severed tendons to amputated toes.

If a mower accident occurs—with just a minor injury—immediate treatment is necessary to flush the wound


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athletic activity until the pain subsides and seek treatment if symptoms persist. Besides limiting the frequency of extended physical activities, stretch your calf muscles regularly, avoid wearing flat shoes, walking barefoot, and using over-the-counter arch supports and heel cushions.

Blisters and neuromas are annoying sources of forefoot pain from sports activity. Blisters, which


occur from excessive moisture and friction, may be prevented by use of acrylic socks. Poor fitting, constricting athletic shoes also produce blisters as well as neuromas (pinched nerves of the foot), which cause severe pain and numbness of the inner toes.

When injuries occur, make an appointment to visit our office without delay. Prompt treatment can often prevent further injury. 

thoroughly and apply antibiotics to prevent infection. Superficial wounds can be treated on an outpatient basis, but more serious injuries usually require surgical intervention to repair tendon damage, deep clean the wound and suture it. Usually we are able to surgically reattach tendons severed in lawnmower accidents, unless toes have been amputated.

Thousands of foot injuries can be prevented by taking some simple precautions when operating rotary-blade mowers. Don't let your yard become a "toe-away" zone!

Lawnmower Safety Tips

- Don't mow a wet lawn. Losing control from slipping on rain-soaked grass is the leading cause of foot injuries caused by power mowers.
- Wear heavy shoes or work boots when mowing—no sneakers or sandals.
- Mow slowly across slopes, never go up and down.
- Never pull a running mower backward.
- Keep the clip bag attached to prevent projectile injuries.
- Use a mower with a release mechanism on the handle that automatically shuts it off when the hands let go.
- Keep children away from the lawn when mowing it. 

Kids Must Warm Up, Too!

As youth sports leagues start gearing up for the fall season, parents and amateur coaches should keep in mind that stretching and warm-ups aren't just for adult athletes.

If you've ever seen mini-vans full of kids arriving at practice, you know that they tend to run right out onto the field. By teaching your children to include time for warming up prior to participating in team sports you'll accomplish two important goals: they'll have fewer injuries, and they'll develop a habit

that will serve them well throughout their lives.

Equally important is to teach the young athletes that it isn't "cool" to play with pain. Continuing to play following an injury, or resuming play before a sprain or stress fracture is properly healed, can result in even further damage to young tendons and bones. At the first sign of a serious injury, make an appointment with our office for an evaluation and diagnosis. 