

Repeat OFFENDERS

SIX WAYS OLD INJURIES CAN
IMPACT YOUR HEALTH NOW
BY LINDA MELONE



»» 1. SPRAINED ANKLE

Looking cute can be bad for your health. A stumble in high heels or an awkward step while showing off fancy footwork playing soccer with your kid can result in this injury. It happens when a ligament is overstretched or torn. “The ankle most often rolls inward—but it can also roll outward, spraining or partially tearing ligaments that scar later,” explains Courtney Dawson, MD, orthopedic surgeon at the New England Baptist Outpatient Care Center in Dedham, Massachusetts.

REAPPEARING ACT “Once a sprain occurs, it is much more likely to transpire again,” says Cori Grantham, MD, orthopedic specialist at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas. That’s because the injury may leave your ankle less stable later in life, particularly when you miss out on the appropriate treatment. “As you age you may feel awkward doing activities involving quick motions, like cutting or pivoting, which are often difficult,” Grantham adds.



PROTECTION PLAN Bolster your ankle by working with a physical therapist to fortify surrounding muscles, says Mark Gugliotti, DPT, an assistant professor of physical therapy at New York Institute of Technology in Old Westbury, New York. Invest in active footwear with a supportive sole and adequate arch support if you're flat-footed. Bracing or taping the ankle may be beneficial during sports that require quick turns.

»»» 2. TORN ACL

It's not just a hazard for basketball players and skiers. Damage to your anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), one of four main ligaments stabilizing the knee, is often signaled by a popping sound and can happen simply from tripping or landing awkwardly after a jump. "ACL tears usually result from hyperextension, as the knee twists in the opposite direction from which it was designed to move," explains Gugliotti. Unfortunately, women are at greater

that strengthen the knee without stressing it, such as walking, biking, swimming, Pilates and using low-impact cardio machines like elliptical trainers.

»»» 3. HERNIATED DISK

"It's one of the most common injuries I see in people under 40," says Michael A. Gleiber, MD, board-certified orthopedic spine surgeon and affiliate assistant professor at The Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida. Unlike a bulging disk (which usually doesn't hurt), slipped or herniated disks usually cause pain and occur when the disks between the bones of your spinal column break open. A handful of women can trace their back pain to a car accident or frequently picking up a colicky baby. "But about 90% of this damage occurs without knowing the culprit," says Gleiber.

REAPPEARING ACT "A small herniation generally goes undetected and has

ALWAYS USE PROPER FORM, WHETHER YOU'RE LIFTING WEIGHTS, PICKING UP A BAG OF GROCERIES OR SITTING IN A CHAIR.

risk for this sideliner, perhaps due to our wider hips or lesser muscular strength, which makes the knee less stable.

REAPPEARING ACT Your knee may become more prone to developing painful arthritis and meniscus tears—splits in the C-shaped cartilage that acts as a shock absorber for the knee, says Dawson. A torn meniscus could lead to pain and swelling, and may even lock out.

PROTECTION PLAN If you have another knee injury, frequently play sports or have a physical job, consider surgery. Otherwise, opt out of activities that require sudden lateral movement (like tennis or soccer), which could irritate the ACL, and those that require pounding (such as running or stair-climbing), which can negatively impact the knee. Instead, commit to exercises

limited impact as you age," says Gleiber. "However, a large herniation, which is determined by a clinical exam and an MRI, can later cause pain when bending, lifting or twisting as well as numbness, tingling and shooting pains that can seem to appear out of nowhere."

PROTECTION PLAN Work your core, suggests fitness expert Ellen Barrett, MA. "Just about all mat Pilates exercises work great," she says. You might also start and finish any workout with one minute in child's pose, where you sit on your heels and lay your chest on your thighs with your arms at your side. In addition, always use proper form, whether you're lifting weights, picking up a bag of groceries or sitting in a chair—no slouching, ladies.



Prevention Rx

THE DOS AND DON'TS OF BOOSTING BONE HEALTH

There's plenty you can do—and a few things you shouldn't—to protect your frame. Getting your daily dose of calcium is just the beginning when it comes to staying strong.

DO: CUT BACK ON SALT

A high-sodium diet can cause kidneys to release calcium, which results in bone loss and an increased risk of breaks, explains Gail Cresci, PhD, RD, in the department of gastroenterology with Cleveland Clinic. The easiest way to keep daily sodium intake under 1,500 milligrams per day is by eliminating processed foods, which contain more than 75% of the sodium we eat.

DON'T: MIX WHEAT BRAN AND CALCIUM PILLS

If you eat wheat

bran cereal or muffins for breakfast, wait at least a couple hours before taking calcium supplements. "The bran contains phytates, which bind with minerals and interfere with calcium absorption," says Cresci.

DO: EAT YOUR FRUITS AND VEGGIES

Oranges and bananas may not sound like bone builders, but their high potassium and micronutrient content makes them particularly important healing foods. Other potassium-rich

foods include tomato products, avocados, spinach, yogurt, prunes and sweet potatoes.

DON'T: OVERDO THE COFFEE

Caffeine may lower your body's ability to absorb calcium, so consider cutting back. The National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends limiting coffee to less than three cups a day.

DO: SOAK THOSE BEANS

Although beans contain calcium, magnesium, fiber and other healthy nutrients, they're also high in calcium-

blocking phytates. Reduce phytate levels by eating sprouted legumes or soaking dry beans in water for several hours before cooking them.

DON'T: SHORTCHANGE YOURSELF

Living in a cold or cloudy climate limits exposure to sunlight, the body's main source of vitamin D, which it needs to absorb calcium. If that sounds like the place you call home, you may want to take a supplement. Cresci recommends 1,200 IU of vitamin D daily.

»»» 4. TORN ROTATOR CUFF

Armchair athletes beware: Something as simple as pulling on a sweater or lifting an object into the trunk of your car can lead to tears in your rotator cuff, a group of four muscles that stabilizes the shoulder. The result is muscular imbalances and pain down the road.

REAPPEARING ACT Even though surrounding muscles and structures will try to compensate for weakness, a small tear will likely become larger. This could eventually lead to bursitis, an inflammation of the bursa sac, which helps provide cushioning and protection for the cuff and surrounding tendons, explains Gugliotti. Another possible complication is shoulder impingement—when soft tissue in the shoulder is compressed by bone. You'll feel a sharp pain and your range of motion (including overhead reach) may be limited. Arthritis could also develop down the line.

PROTECTION PLAN Work with a physical therapist on a conditioning program to strengthen your shoulder, back and arms. Meanwhile, avoid or modify everyday overhead movements and workout activities. "Wall push-ups, for example, are a perfect rotator cuff strengthening exercise once you've healed," says Barrett.

»»» 5. HIP LABRAL TEAR

"When it happens, it feels like a pinching deep inside the hip that usually goes away when lying down," explains Gleiber, who is also a spokesperson for the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons. The labrum, a ring of soft tissue that follows the outer rim of the hip socket, acts like a cushion inside the hip joint. "A tear commonly occurs from excessive bending and rotation of the hip, as in skiing, running or doing ballet," he explains. Physical therapy or surgery may be options, depending on the severity of the tear.

REAPPEARING ACT Labral tears often put you at a higher risk of developing arthritis as your body attempts to stabilize the joint. Weakness in the hip muscles will eventually affect the entire lower extremity, causing hip and knee pain and gait problems. For example, weak hips cause a knock-

kneed position, in which the knees turn inward. This creates alignment issues with the kneecap, which can result in pain, ligament and tendon strains and even ACL tears, says Grantham.

PROTECTION PLAN "Always work on strengthening your hips to help prevent any further problems with them or your knees," explains Barrett. A physical therapist can create a program of modified weight-bearing exercises. (You might walk for 10 minutes instead of 30, for example.) A good hip strengthener and stretch is the yoga pose Supta Baddha Konasana, or reclining bound angle pose, in which you lie on your back with feet together and knees pointed outward. "Hold for around one to five minutes post-workout," says Barrett.

»»» 6. TORN WRIST LIGAMENT

It's a basic instinct: As you stumble, you extend your arms to break your fall with your hands. Afterward, you expect some swelling and soreness, but what results may be much worse—a common injury involving a tear of the scapholunate ligament, located near the center of the wrist. "That ligament holds the bones of the wrist in proper alignment," explains Stuart Elkowitz, MD, orthopedic surgeon and hand surgeon with Putnam Hospital Center and Northern Westchester Hospital, in New York. "When it is completely torn, the bones shift."

REAPPEARING ACT A scapholunate ligament tear often seems like a simple strain and goes undiagnosed and untreated. If not addressed at the time it occurs, a predictable pattern of arthritis ensues years later, resulting in pain and limited range of motion.

PROTECTION PLAN "Using hand therapy putty to improve your grip strength helps," says Grantham. In addition, simple stretches increase flexibility. (Try holding up your hand as if stopping traffic and gently pulling back your fingers. Then point your fingers down toward the ground and gently stretch in this opposite direction.) Don't forget to modify exercises, like doing plank pose on your forearms or using your own body weight instead of additional weights, until you get stronger, suggests Barrett.