

SPORTS AND CHIROPRACTIC CARE

By Dr. Heath Schipp

Children are back in school and school sports are in full swing. With all these children playing sports come sports-related injuries. Did you know that professional athletes in almost every sport rely on regular chiropractic care? The reason they do is because it works. Chiropractic does three things for the athletes: it helps to prevent future injuries, it enhances performance, and it speeds recovery from injuries.

Although it is always possible to be injured in any sport, the increased fitness due to exercising and the athletic competition make it worthwhile to participate. However, many recreational athletes are not functioning to their fullest potential. Anytime the nervous system malfunctions, the body compensates and changes the way other parts of the body function within it. The compensation causes the body to use more energy to achieve the same result as before the malfunction. This can occur at any time, even when symptoms are not evident. With proper chiropractic care the athlete can improve range of motion, muscle function, coordination, balance, and performance. Chiropractic allows the athlete to reach peak performance by removing any interferences which can decrease the muscular functioning and change the biomechanics of these joints.

Recreational athletes tend to injure themselves more than professional athletes. This is because the muscles and joints of a “weekend warrior” lack the flexibility and conditioning of the trained athletes and thus injuries are more common. To counteract this fact, athletes must stay in shape when not participating in their sport by exercising and must stretch their muscles before participating. Take time to warm up slowly before the game. Increase your heart rate with calisthenics, flexibility exercises, or light running. When you start to break a sweat, your body is at the correct temperature to stretch tendons and muscles.

If you should suffer a soft tissue injury, commonly known as a sprain or a strain, or a bony injury, the best immediate treatment is easy to remember. “Rice” (Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation) your injury.

- Rest the injured area for 48 hours
- Put an ice pack on the injury for 20 minutes at a time, 4 to 8 times per day. Use an ice pack or a plastic bag filled with crushed ice that has been wrapped in a towel
- Compression of an injured ankle, knee, or wrist may help reduce swelling. These include bandages such as elastic wraps, special boots, air casts, and splints
- Use a pillow to keep the injured area elevated above the level of the heart
- Chiropractic care can also be used to rehabilitate the injured muscles, bones, and joints

Adequate hydration is another point that is often overlooked in some athletes. Water is used by the body for transporting nutrients and waste, and as a medium to temperature regulation. The average person needs 6-8 glasses of fluid per day, but

athletes may require more fluids due to excessive sweating and increased metabolic activity. And don't forget to wear sunscreen and a hat (when possible) to protect your skin from sunburn.

Chiropractic care gives the competitive edge to all kinds of athletes from golfers, joggers, and tennis players to impact sports such as football, basketball, and baseball. Remember to take care of your body because if you don't who will.