



# *Records are Meant to be Broken, Not Athletes*

*- Cal Ripken*

Sports and other kinds of physical activity are mainstays of American culture. It's a known fact that staying physically active keeps people healthy and helps them live longer.

While the rewards for staying fit are obvious, there's one common risk associated with all physical activity - injury.

There are guidelines that can help you avoid being injured, but even the most careful athlete isn't immune to injury. In this brochure you will learn how to prevent, recognize and treat athletic injuries.

**Injury Prevention**

**When Injuries Occur**

**Recovery Steps**

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# Tips for Injury Prevention

*from Cal Ripken and  
the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons*

**A**thletic injuries can affect anybody at any time during a physical activity. The amount of risk for injury depends on the activity, the environment, and the attentiveness of the participant at that time. Merely recognizing the chance for injury and why it can occur is a big boost to preventing it from ever happening. Injury prevention is important; take it from someone who knows, the Baltimore Orioles' own Cal Ripken:

- 1.** Always warm up and stretch properly before and after you participate in any physical activity.

*"Whether it's Spring Training or during the season, I would never play a game without stretching beforehand."*



- 2.** Be sure to have the proper safety equipment required for the sport or activity, and make sure that the equipment is functional and in good condition.



*"Safety equipment is important, but it won't help anyone if it's not working right. I always make sure to check my equipment before every game."*

- 3.** Make sure the athlete is participating on a level that matches with his or her skill and development.

*"Sports are great for everyone, but make sure you are competing with others on your level."*



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## 4. Learn to read your body's messages. The presence of pain may be an indication of a more serious condition or injury.

*"Make sure you know who to turn to if you think you've been injured. I always see my athletic trainer, but you may have an orthopaedic surgeon or a family physician who can check you for injury."*



## 5. Be sure to learn about the equipment that is used for specific activities and sports, improper use of the equipment could lead to serious injury.

*"Equipment is an important part of any sport, but if you don't know how to use it properly you could get hurt."*



## 6. Parents and coaches can prevent injuries among youth by encouraging an atmosphere of healthy competition.

*"Sure it's nice to win, but for kids the most important thing is that they are out there getting exercise, learning how to work as a team, and having fun."*



## 7. A balanced diet and an understanding of the relationship between activity and nutrition is essential to the optimal performance of an athlete.

*"Take care of your body. I could never have played Major League Baseball all of these years if I didn't take care of mine."*



## 8. Finally, use common sense. And always remember, no matter what sport or activity you pursue the key is to have fun!

*"In the end, the most important tip to remember is to be active, be careful and have fun!"*



# What to do when musculoskeletal injuries occur



**B**efore you can treat an injury, you have to be able to recognize that an injury has occurred. The easiest way to detect injury is through the presence of pain. Pain is how your body tells you that it is damaged in some way, and often this pain results in loss of athletic performance. While athletes might not lose their full physical abilities, their athletic performance is greatly decreased by injuries. That is why it is very important for the participant to recognize and acknowledge injury when it first occurs.

The first thing you can do is to provide basic treatments to the injury. The most common and effective method is **RICE**. That stands for **Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation**. By following this simple process you can start the healing process before a doctor or an athletic trainer can look at it.

**R**EST - Stop further activity and keep the injured area in a relaxed and prone position

**I**CE - Apply ice to the injured area to prevent or slow swelling

**C**OMPRESSION - Apply pressure and wrap the injured area

**E**LEVATION - Raise the injured area to minimize swelling



# Steps to Treating and Recovering from Injury



**O**nce you and your athletic trainer have determined that a musculoskeletal injury has occurred, you should consult your orthopaedic surgeon. These medical professionals are trained to help people with injuries recover and get back in the game. The orthopaedic surgeon and the athletic trainer combine their unique medical talents to help in all aspects of an athlete's recovery from injury. While these two professionals form a team to best serve the athlete, each person has a separate role to play in the recovery process.

Here are some simple guidelines to help you through the process of treating and recovering from injury:

**Examination and Assessment** - *It is important for the orthopaedic surgeon to know the extent of an injury so he or she can give the injured person the right treatment. After the examination, the doctor will use the information to begin the athlete's road to recovery.*

**Physical Preparation** - *The orthopaedic surgeon will get the injured person physically ready to face the tough rehabilitation program that is essential to a full recovery.*

**Rehabilitation** - *The athletic trainer takes the information provided by the orthopaedic surgeon concerning the injury and develops a strategy to help the person recover. This strategy or program will include stretches and exercises that isolate the injured area and help return it to its pre-injured form.*

**Recovery** - *By slowly regaining strength and a full range of motion, the injured area becomes ready for physical activity again. Throughout rehabilitation the athletic trainer constantly assesses the injury and makes note of the speed of recovery to better serve the athlete.*

**Final Examination** - *Once the rehabilitation process is completed the athletic trainer will consult the orthopaedic surgeon and a final examination will be performed on the athlete. If the orthopaedic surgeon feels that the injured area is as good as it can be the athlete will be cleared to perform once again.*



If you are not involved in an organized sport or school activity, you may not have access to a certified athletic trainer. In that case, you should consult your general practitioner to determine whether or not you are injured. If you are indeed injured, he or she can either treat or refer you to an orthopaedic surgeon.

Just remember that no matter how prepared you are for an activity, there is still the possibility for injury. By following the guidelines for injury prevention, you greatly decrease the chances for injury, but still there is no full-proof method. If an injury occurs, the key to full recovery lies in understanding how to get the proper help you need.



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If you would like to learn more about injury prevention visit:

**American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons**  
[www.AAOS.org](http://www.AAOS.org)

**Professional Baseball Athletic Trainers Society**  
[www.PBATS.org](http://www.PBATS.org)