



# Physiotherapy Sports Injury & Recovery



## Sports injuries

Participation in sport is an excellent way of undertaking physical activity. While there is a risk of injury in most sports, that risk is far outweighed by the benefits of physical activity. For example, exercise can protect against lifestyle diseases such as heart problems, obesity and type 2 diabetes. The weight bearing activities involved in many sports can also reduce the risk of developing osteoporosis by increasing bone mineral density. Sport is also an enjoyable way for people to socialise and build friendships.

Injuries can affect men, women and children of all ages and activity levels and it is important to receive a diagnosis and treatment from a Chartered Physiotherapist in a timely manner so that you can recover as quickly and effectively as possible and return to the sport or activity that you enjoy.

## Preventing injuries

- Correct warm up exercises
- Protective strapping in some cases
- Correct footwear and protective equipment (e.g. helmets and shin pads)
- Specific conditioning for a particular sport
- Obeying the rules of games



## Common causes of injuries

- **Inadequate preparation for sport:** Warm up allows you to increase body temperature and blood flow to the muscles and joints of the limbs in preparation for exercise.
- **Doing too much training too soon:** Your body needs time to adapt to the activities you are exposing it to so that it can develop the strength to cope with demands of these activities. For example, if you haven't played football for a long time, your body will not be used to the amount of changes of direction that are involved in the sport. If you play a lot of football in a short period of time you may be vulnerable to experiencing a muscle strain or ligament sprain. It is important to listen to your body. Pain during or after exercise may be a signal that you are doing too much. A Chartered Physiotherapist will be able to advise you on a safe return-to-sport strategy.

- **Unsuitable equipment:** Your equipment needs to be in good condition and suitable for the sport. For example, helmets, racquets, clubs, shin guards, gum shields and footwear need to fit properly
- **Returning to sport too soon after injury:** a Chartered Physiotherapist will be able to design an injury rehabilitation programme that prepares you fully for the demands of your chosen sport. It is important to complete this rehabilitation plan fully in order to reduce the risk of injury recurrence.
- **Any injury will predispose you to injury in the future:** Make sure you see a Chartered Physiotherapist so that you will undergo appropriate rehabilitation and receive the right advice to help prevent this.

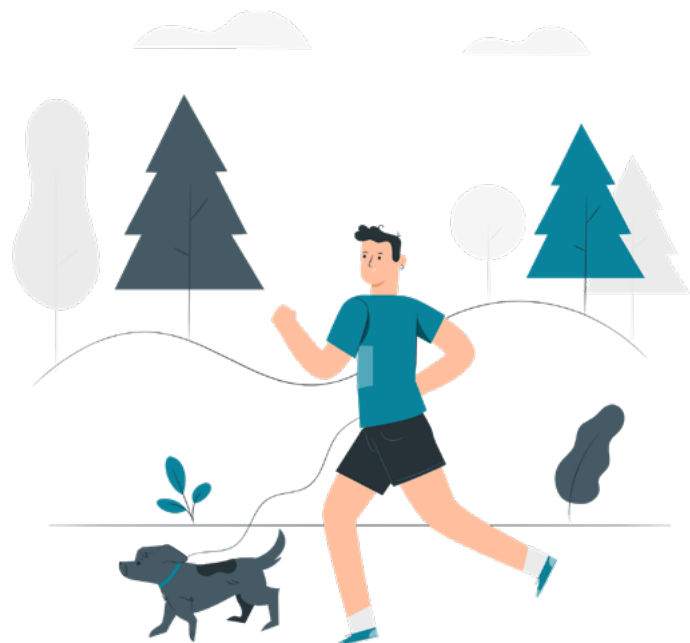
## Common injuries

- Bone bruises (also known as contusions)
- Soft tissue bruises (also known as haematomas)
- Ligament sprains
- Muscle and tendon strains
- Joint injuries (e.g. cartilage lesions)
- Overuse injuries (e.g. gradual onset groin pain or heel pain)



## Injured?

Severe pain, swelling and bruising are signs of serious injury and should be reviewed by a medical professional – a Doctor or Chartered Physiotherapist. For more mild aches and pains apply the PEACE and LOVE principles. A Chartered Physiotherapist can provide you with guidance as you follow these principles.



# The PEACE and LOVE Principles

## PEACE

**Protection:** Avoid activities and movements that increase pain for the first few days after injury

**Elevation:** Elevate the injured limb higher than the heart as often as possible

**Avoid Anti-inflammatories:** Avoid taking anti-inflammatory medications as they reduce tissue healing. Avoid icing

**Compression:** Use elastic bandage or taping to reduce swelling

**Education:** Your body knows best. Avoid unnecessary passive treatments and medical investigations and let nature play its role

## LOVE

**Load:** Let pain guide your gradual return to normal activities

**Optimism:** Condition your brain for optimal recovery by being confident and positive

**Vascularisation:** Choose pain-free cardiovascular activities to increase blood flow to repairing tissues

**Exercise:** Restore mobility, strength and balance by adopting an active approach to recovery

## What can go wrong

Sports injuries are classified as either 'sudden onset' or 'gradual onset'. Sudden onset injuries can occur due to direct contact with another person or object resulting in a contusion (i.e. bone bruise), haematoma (e.g. dead leg) or fracture. They may also occur as a result of indirect dynamic forces (e.g. twisting or sprinting mechanisms) causing ligament sprains or muscle and tendon strains. Gradual onset injuries typically do not have any identifiable event and symptoms appear gradually over time. The lower back, groin, knee and heel are common sites for gradual onset injuries. These types of injuries may occur due to overuse and inadequate recovery between training sessions and matches.

## Getting back in the game

In order to return to sport safely and with confidence, the injured body part should be restored to full function. This means that you should have regained pre-injury levels of strength, power, balance and mobility. The return to sporting activity should be undertaken gradually in order to reduce the chances of injury recurrence. This usually entails gradually building up the duration and frequency of training sessions and matches so that there is no sudden increase in activity levels following a period of inactivity.

## Getting help

When you choose a Chartered Physiotherapist you can be assured that you are being treated by a Physiotherapist with a university degree qualification who is committed to the highest standards of ethical and clinical excellence. Many Chartered Physiotherapists have additional postgraduate qualifications in the sports medicine field.

Contact your Chartered Physiotherapist for further information and an individualised plan on minimising the risk of running injuries or for assessment, treatment & rehabilitation of injuries.

**visit [askthephysio.ie](https://askthephysio.ie)  
or [iscp.ie](https://iscp.ie) to learn more**

