



Speeding Your Recovery

You have an injury, and your doctor has said you can't participate in your favorite sport. Do you call your trainer and cancel your sessions until further notice? Not if you're smart! There are things you and your trainer can do to prepare you for a return to activity.

Follow the Doctor's Orders

First, you must follow the treatment plan ordered by your physician—icing the injury, taking anti-inflammatories, performing the recommended exercises, stretching and, if necessary, using a splint. Your injury will usually respond well enough to eliminate the need for a lengthy time off from activity.

Perform Related Activities

You may be able to return to your favorite sport more quickly *and* be better at it than ever if you spend your recuperation time performing closely related activities that help you stay in shape.

For example, if you are a golfer with an ankle or a knee injury, ask your physician if you can still play a short game of golf, or practice putting or some short chip shots. After all, there is no better time to work on green play than when you have no other choice! A runner with a lower-extremity injury could probably continue training, without aggravating the injury, by participating in deep-water workouts—simulating running mechanics in the deep end of a pool. That way, he or she uses the appropriate muscles and gets both the physical and emotional benefits of a good cardiovascular workout.

Work the Appropriate Muscle Groups

If your trainer doesn't participate in your favorite sport, explain the move-

ments involved, itemizing the different components of the activity so he or she can determine what muscles are used. With that background information, the trainer can design a workout that uses the appropriate muscle groups without aggravating your injury.

For example, if you are that golfer with the lower-extremity injury, your trainer might design a program to strengthen your back, arms and shoulders. Back exercises should focus on good posture, rotational movements and flexibility. Arm and shoulder exercises should include wrist, forearm and rotator cuff strengthening. Your trainer may also incorporate visualization techniques in the workout to sharpen the mental component.

Do Sport-Specific Drills

Nearly every activity can be broken down into specific skill patterns you can practice with drills. (Just remember, movements must be controlled to avoid further injury. If you feel any pain, let your trainer know so he or she can restructure the workout.) For example, if you are a tennis player with a knee or an ankle injury, you can "work on your game" with the following activities:

- Do well-leg balancing exercises while simulating forehand and backhand swings.
 - While standing still, practice overhead swings with equal weight distribution between both feet.
 - Hit returns from a ball machine while standing stationary at the net.
- Your trainer can also incorporate strengthening exercises for the wrist, forearm, shoulder, trunk rotators and legs in your workout.

If you are an injured skier, exercises should focus on strength, agility, balance and proprioception. A few examples of

appropriate exercises are (1) single-knee bends; (2) single-leg presses; (3) balancing on one foot, first with your eyes open, and then with your eyes closed and with varying positions of knee bend; (4) well-leg stationary bicycling. You can start out doing these exercises with your uninjured side and gradually add the injured side as tolerated.

Getting Back in the Swing

If, when you are injured, you make a conscious effort to rehabilitate yourself by continuing to work out with your trainer, you will not suffer the consequences of too much downtime. Rather than sitting back and waiting for time to heal you, you can use your recuperation period to get in the best possible shape. That way, you will be ready—muscularly, cardiovascularly and mentally—to handle the demands of your sport again. ●

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