

PREVENTING BASKETBALL INJURIES

Each year, more than 1.6 million basketball-related injuries are treated in hospitals, doctors' offices, clinics, ambulatory surgery centers and hospital emergency rooms.

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons offers the following tips to prevent basketball injuries:

- Always take time to warm up and stretch. Research studies have shown that cold muscles are more prone to injury. Warm up with jumping jacks, stationary cycling or running or walking in place for 3 to 5 minutes. Then slowly and gently stretch, holding each stretch for 30 seconds.
- Play only your position and know where other players are on the court to reduce the chance of collisions. Don't hold, block, push, charge, or trip opponents. Use proper techniques for passing and scoring.
- Select basketball shoes that fit snugly, offer support, and are non-skid. Cotton socks can absorb perspiration and also give added support to the foot. Ankle supports can reduce the incidence of ankle sprains.
- Protective knee and elbow pads will protect you from bruises and abrasions.
- Use a mouth guard to protect your teeth and mouth.
- If you wear glasses, use safety glasses or glass guards protect your eyes.

- Do not wear jewelry or chew gum during practice or games.
- Outdoor courts should be free of rocks, holes, and other hazards. Inside courts should be clean, free of debris, and have good traction.
- When playing outside, environmental conditions must be considered. Players should avoid playing in extreme weather or on courts that are not properly lighted in the evening.
- Baskets and boundary lines should not be too close to walls, bleachers, water fountains, or other structures. Goals, as well as the walls behind them, should be padded.
- Be knowledgeable about first aid and be able to administer it for minor injuries, such as facial cuts, bruises, or minor tendinitis, strains, or sprains.
- Be prepared for emergency situations and have a plan to reach medical personnel to treat injuries such as concussions, dislocations, elbow contusions, wrist or finger sprains, and fractures.