

INTRINSIC CAUSES OF SPORTS INJURIES

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Intrinsic causes are those that are internal to the athlete e.g. due to his or her physique, medial history, level of physical fitness etc. Physical therapists are very interested in the manipulation of intrinsic factors in injury prevention but current practice is not always supported by the latest research. Brief comments on some of the more important factors are given below (modified from Watson 1997).

- Previous injury is one of the most important predisposing factors to future injury. This fact is of great interest to physiotherapists.
- Fatigue. There seems to be a higher incidence of injury near the end of day-long activities, like skiing. But not in matches that last up to 90 minutes.
- High dynamic strength and jumping ability appear to be predisposing factors to sports injury.
- Skill and experience. There is some evidence that inexperienced athletes are at a greater risk of injury. The risk is lower in experienced recreational athletes but is high in top-level athletes.
- Defects of posture and body mechanics have been linked to specific sports injuries in the players of basketball, field games, and in army cadets.
- Warming animal tissue has a number of effects: some would be likely to reduce the risk of sports injury while others might increase it. Physiotherapists may be surprised that studies on the effects of warm-up on the incidence of injuries in humans have not demonstrated definite effects.
- They may also be surprised to learn that there is no definite evidence linking (1) lack of flexibility (2) imbalance in strength between knee flexors and knee extensors, to the incidence of sports injury. Such links are generally accepted by physiotherapists in Europe.
- There is clearly a need for more, and better, research into the relationship between sports injuries and intrinsic factors such as flexibility muscle balance and warm-up.

REFERENCE

Watson AWS: Sports injuries, incidence, causes, prevention. Physical Therapy Reviews (in press) 1997.