

PhysioBiz

Health newflashes

for bodies busy moving, working, playing, being.



Good sports

Welcome to PhysioBiz, with healthcare advice and information you can trust and rely on, brought to you by the South African Society of Physiotherapy!

Do you consider yourself a good sport? No, we don't mean someone who is fair and game for most things, we mean someone who lives their life as though sport really mattered, someone who incorporates sport into their lives, someone for whom regular sporting activities are necessary – even if that's just a game of two-a-side soccer with the kids on a Sunday, or a thrice-weekly jog with the dog.

Regular movement is not just a wonderful thing to do for your physical health, but also for your mental wellbeing: “Exercise helps memory and thinking through both direct and indirect means. The benefits of exercise come directly from its ability to reduce insulin resistance, reduce inflammation, and stimulate the release of growth factors—chemicals in the brain that affect the health of brain cells, the growth of new blood vessels in the brain, and even the abundance and survival of new brain cells.

“Indirectly, exercise improves mood and sleep, and reduces stress and anxiety. Problems in these areas frequently cause or contribute to cognitive impairment.”
(Harvard Health Publishing, 9 April 2014)

So there's your top reason for keeping up involvement in sports throughout your life. But let's face it, us weekend warriors playing touch rugby with friends, cycling 50kms on Sundays or slamming balls around the tennis court are quite likely to sustain injuries – either acute injuries from a fall or a collision, or chronic injuries from overuse of underused tissues (that makes sense, doesn't it?) like muscles and ligaments.

Then, just like your professional sporting counterparts, like Wayde van Niekerk and Ann Ashworth and Siya Kolisi, your first port of call should be a physiotherapist with a special interest in sport.

“Physiotherapists with a special interest in sports have a lot of post-graduate work under their belts which gives them special insight into how the sporting body functions and how to rehabilitate it back to excellence,” says Elaine Burger, new chair of the SASP Sports Physiotherapy Group.

Physiotherapists who've taken sport on as their major focus and done intensive study in helping athletes improve performance and manage injury are much more than just masseuses. They work with all levels of sports, from the really amateur to the high-flying elite athletes, bringing unique skills into play.

They are able to rehabilitate sportsmen and women, getting them back into play in super-fast time; while the athlete is off the field, they work on pain management, restoration of flexibility and range of movement, and restoring the all-important psychological resilience and preparedness.

“We work to restore and enhance strength and endurance,” says Burger. Indeed, physiotherapists with a special interest in sport are often called upon to look at an athlete's style – her gait when running, his landing when bowling in cricket, the way an athlete holds his or her head while in action, all of which can provide clues about what needs tweaking to the physiotherapist intent on making them better, stronger, faster.

To find a physiotherapist with a special interest in sports, go to www.saphysio.co.za.