

# Health

## Use Pre-Season Prep to Kick Start a New Year in Sports



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**A**s a new athletic season approaches, I would like to review some basic information that may be helpful to you to perform better during the first few weeks of practice.

### Nutrition and Hydration

Athletes should eat a small meal every 3-4 hours. Don't forget to eat before practice so that you will have enough energy to perform optimally. Any meals you eat prior to practices or games should include 2/3 carbohydrates for the "quick energy" you will need during participation and 1/3 protein for the slower-burning energy that will keep you in the game. Try to avoid milk and fried foods just prior to participation.

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One may require up to two gallons of water daily when practicing in conditions of high heat and humidity. Young athletes should avoid "energy drinks" as many of these are loaded with sugar and caffeine and can elevate blood pressure to dangerous levels.

### The Medicine Chest

Bumps and bruises are inevitable. Some things you should keep in mind:

Remember **R. I. C. E.** when dealing with any injury — **R**est the injured body part, **I**ce it, **C**ompress it with tape or a bandage, and **E**levate it to control swelling.

Ibuprofen (ex. Motrin) will help to control the swelling and the pain associated with sprains and other injuries. My "Rule of 3" is helpful: 3 (200mg) pills, 3 times a day, 3 days in a row; take a break for 3 days, then start again if needed.

Acetaminophen (ex. Tylenol) is good for everyday aches and pains, like headaches, strains and bruises, but unlike ibuprofen, it has no anti-inflammatory effect — it does not reduce swelling.

For cuts and scrapes, alcohol (OUCH! Use this sparingly; it hurts!) and peroxide should be used **ONLY** the first time the wound is cleaned. After that, soap and water and antibiotic ointment should be used.

### Pre-participation Physical Examination

We are all familiar with the sports participation screening. A yearly rite of passage for the prep athlete, it is simply a general examination required by your county athletic association. It cannot be expected to discover or uncover all possible (even life-threatening) abnormalities. If the athlete or someone in his/her family has a history of heart problems or sudden death, then the health care providers involved in this

screening may recommend that the athlete be seen prior to the athlete's participation in sports by the athlete's primary care doctor (family doctor or pediatrician) and/or cardiologist (heart doctor) or any other doctor suggested by the primary care doctor and/or cardiologist.

### Conditioning and Support

If you participate in an outdoor sport that begins practicing in the summer heat, start acclimating yourself to the heat **BEFORE** practice starts. Spend 15-30 minutes outside (avoid all exercise in the hottest part of the day) running, stretching, or doing some other light to moderate physical activity twice a day for a couple of days in a row. Then, "ramp it up" to 30-45 minutes; then 45-60 minutes, and so on. The first week of practice will be more easily tolerated. Note: this is in addition to the pre-season workouts mandated by your coaching staff.

If you have a history of injury or pain in your ankles or any other joint, get taped "early and often." Speak with your athletic trainer or team physician about a bracing or other treatment options.

If your sport involves a great deal of running (ex. football, soccer, cross country), soak both feet and ankles in a "slush bucket" of ice water after every practice. Likewise, if your sport involves repetitive overhand motion (ex. tennis, volleyball), ice your shoulders and elbows after every practice. This is a helpful preemptive measure that could make the following day's practice more comfortable and more productive.

### Hygiene and Equipment

Work with your coaches and athletic trainers to make certain that your helmets, pads, cleats and compression gear fit properly, are clean and in good condition — simple measures that will prevent injury. Likewise, shower as soon as possible after practice or a game. Good hygiene stops most microbes in their tiny little tracks.

Finally, something that is often overlooked — get enough sleep before you practice. You'll be surprised how much better you feel and perform.

Have a great season.

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