PHYSIC ROOM

CRICKET AND PHYSICAL INJURIES GUIDE
Cricket Injuries at elite level have been demonstrated to occur at a rate of around 18 injuries in total for a squad of 25 players who play twenty matches in a season.

On average, around 9% of cricketers have an injury at any given time, although in fast bowlers over 15% are injured at any given time.

There are very different physical demands involved in different types of cricket, which has meant the injury profile is slightly different between five-day test matches, three-day matches and one-day matches. The launch of Twenty20 cricket has placed a new physical requirement on cricketers, although it is too early for the effects of these demands to be analysed in sports injury research.

Low back pain is particularly prevalent among younger fast bowlers. The repetitive action of bowling for long spells places excessive stress on the tissues of the lower back, where stress fractures of the vertebra (Spondylolysis) can develop.

Research has indicated that muscle injuries such as Hamstring Strains and Side Strains are the most common cricket injuries. These injuries are due to the functional demands of the sport where occasional sprinting and ball throwing may be repeated across a seven-hour day. With all this risk, it’s important to have the knowledge you need when it comes to common cricket injuries. So, join us as we run through some common ailments...

**Things to remember when buying a brace or support:**

- **What type do I need?** Cricket appropriate braces come in different shapes and sizes, but can usually be categorised into four types, sleeves, supports, stabilisers and hinges. Sleeves easily slip over the leg or arm, while supports are adjustable and usually wrap around the knee. Stabilisers offer advanced support by featuring steel springs either side of the joint. While hinged braces allow the joint to move in a natural motion while offering the most support.

- **What style do I want?** There are two standard styles of braces, the slip-on or the wraparound. Slip-ons are used by putting your limb through the brace and pulling up the hand/leg. While wraparound braces, of course, wrap around and can usually be adjusted by straps made of such material as Velcro.

- **What size do I need?** This all depends on which brace or support you choose. Typically, each will feature a size guide, but may require some DIY measuring for products such as knee braces. If you are between sizes, it’s often recommended you go for the larger size, but this may vary from product to product.
HAMSTRING STRAIN

What is it?

A Hamstring Strain is a tear in the muscle tissue. Hamstring strains tend to affect all cricketers regardless of position and account for around 15% of all cricket injuries. Hamstring strains occur during explosive sprinting activities such as bowling, taking a quick single or fielding a ball. Because of the sudden stress on the muscles, the Hamstrings can be stretched beyond their limits and the muscle tissue can be torn. Any muscle tear is referred to as a strain and depending on its severity, it is classified as a first, second or third degree strain.

How can you prevent it?

In bowlers, especially fast bowlers there is a positive link between ‘over bowling’ and sustaining a Hamstring Strain. Over bowling can be avoided by recording a log of each bowler’s workload to prevent sudden overload or sustained overload.

A warm up prior to cricket is designed to decrease muscle injuries because the muscle is more extensible when the tissue temperature has been increased by one or two degrees. A good warm up should last at least 20 minutes, starting gently and finishing at full pace activity.

Treatment

If you have a Hamstring Strain follow the RICE protocol - rest, ice and compression and elevation (never apply ice directly to the skin). If you have to apply ice at home, an ice bag is recommended.

Seek advice from a doctor or Chartered Physiotherapist regarding rehabilitation. Most Hamstring Strains will be fully healed by 6 weeks, but recurrent problems can occur when a return to play is attempted too early.

For a support/brace option, check out the below product…

- The PhysioRoom.com Neoprene Thigh Support eases pain and swelling in the thigh and hamstring to promote faster healing after injury.
- Useful for runners, cyclists, footballers and more to protect the thigh and hamstring from muscle tears, pulls and swelling. This thigh support can also be used to aid healing injuries.
- Made from neoprene to wick away moisture leaving the wearer more comfortable during exercise. A soothing heat is retained which helps to ease pain and tightness. Meanwhile, compression supplied to the thigh and hamstring by the Neoprene Thigh Support works to reduce any swelling to the area. The combination of these benefits means a faster healing time, and protection against the common injuries suffered by runners and active sports players.
LOW BACK PAIN

What is it?
Low back pain is the general term for any pain in the back. The repetitive action of bowling is the biggest cause of low back pain in cricket, but bending to field the ball and standing in the field for prolonged periods also put stress on the back which can cause back pain.

Any structure of the lower back can be affected - the discs, ligaments, muscles or Facet joints - but in fast bowlers, particularly younger ones, the most commonly affected part of the lower back is the ‘Pars Interarticularis’ region of the Lumbar vertebra, where a stress fracture can develop. This is characterised by a back ache following cricket, particularly when bending backwards.

How can you prevent it?
Fast bowling in cricket requires a combination of spinal hyperextension (bending backwards) together with rotation and side bending of the trunk. When repeated this puts excessive stress on an area of the vertebra called the Pars Interarticularis and this is where a stress fracture develops.

Bowling practice should be carefully monitored to ensure the lower back is not being overloaded. This is particularly important in adolescent players who have just experienced a growth spurt as they are known to be more at risk from this injury.

Treatment
A soothing heat pack can reduce back pain and back muscle spasm. Once diagnosed, stress fractures of the lower back usually require 6 weeks of rest to allow the bone to heal. During this period, an exercise programme under the supervision of a Chartered Physiotherapist can be started. This focuses on exercises to increase the muscular stability in the lower back.

Research has shown that poor muscular stability in the lumbar region can lead to low back pain. Core stability exercises target certain specific muscles which give the spine much better support. This prevents postural faults which can cause low back pain.

For a heat pack option, check out the below product...

- PhysioRoom.com Reusable Hot/Cold Gel Pack is a versatile 25cm x 17cm (10” x 7”) mouldable gel pack that can be used as either a cold pack or hot pack.

- Useful at all stages during the recovery from injury, and can be used again and again. Use it as an ice pack during the early stages following injury to help minimise pain, bleeding and swelling in the tissues. Or use it as a heat pack later to help the healing process by increasing local blood flow and promoting relaxation.

- The soft gel in the pack conducts heat or cold. Simply cool in a refrigerator or freezer and it will stay cold, or warm in hot water (or microwave oven) to use it as a hot pack.
SIDE STRAIN

What is it?

A Side Strain is fairly common in cricket, where it typically occurs in bowlers. A Side Strain refers to a tear of the Internal Oblique, the External Oblique, or the Transversalis fascia at the point where they attach to the four bottom ribs.

In cricket the bowlers suffer the Side Strain on the non-bowling arm side as a result of a forcible contraction of the muscle on that side while they are fully stretched as the bowling arm is cocked for bowling.

How can you prevent it?

Core strength exercises on an exercise mat using a swiss ball and resistance bands can improve muscle function across the trunk and pelvis and this can help to reduce the risk of a Side Strain.

Over bowling should be avoided. Each bowler should have a workload record and care should be taken to avoid sudden increases to the normal workload. The number of overs bowled per session should be increased gradually and adequate rest periods should be provided to prevent fatigue.

Treatment

In the early stages an Ice Pack can be applied for twenty minutes every two hours. A Cohesive Compression Bandage can be applied to help to limit bleeding in the tissues. More active rehabilitation can be started under the supervision of a Chartered Physiotherapist, once the immediate pain resolves.

To help build up your core muscles and prevent further side strains, try the below product…

• This multi-functional gym ball can be used at the gym or home to improve the quality of standard exercises. Sit ups, press ups and stretching are just a few examples of routines bettered by the Gym/Swiss/Yoga Ball. Use to improve your stretch, flexibility, define your body, tone, and to increase the strength of your core muscle.

• This inflatable ball is designed using anti burst material so exercises can be carried out safely. This design also provides peace of mind while carrying out sit ups and more on the ball. The cushioning surface and shape of the ball helps to prevent bad posture or technique during exercises such as sit ups, leading to a healthier and more effective workout.

• Take the PhysioRoom.com Gym/Swiss/Yoga Ball with you to the gym to use at your own leisure or in yoga and pilates classes. Also use in the convenience of your own home.
SHOULDER PAIN

What is it?

Shoulder pain is common in cricket because of the repeated actions of throwing and bowling. The Rotator Cuff muscles (Supraspinatus, Infraspinatus, Subscapularis and Teres Minor) are small muscles situated around the shoulder joint, which can become damaged due to overuse during cricket.

Rotator Cuff injuries often begin as inflammation (Tendonitis) caused by repeated irritation. If the cause of the inflammation is not addressed, partial tears may develop in the cuff that could eventually become a tear all the way through one or more of the Rotator Cuff muscles.

How can you prevent it?

All cricketers should pay attention to flexibility, strength and endurance of the shoulder muscles. Correct throwing and bowling technique can help to reduce injury risk. Shoulder stabilisation exercises under the supervision of a Chartered Physiotherapist can also help prevent damage to the Rotator Cuff tendons.

It is important that any increase in the amount of training or competition must be gradual in order to prevent overload of the Rotator Cuff muscles. In particular, bowling and fielding practice should be increased gradually to allow the Rotator Cuff tendons to adapt.

Treatment

Physiotherapy treatment can reduce acute (short-term) inflammation and chronic (long-term) degeneration of the cuff where a tear is not present. The objective of physiotherapy treatment is to limit inflammation using Ice Therapy (never apply ice directly to the skin). Anti-inflammatory medication prescribed by a doctor is often helpful.

For mild shoulder pain in those who want to continue cricket activities a shoulder support can provide support and reassurance. If a Rotator Cuff tear has developed then the opinion of an Orthopaedic Consultant is required.

For a shoulder support option, check out the below product...

• The Ultimate Performance Neoprene Shoulder Support is a combination of therapeutic heat and support that promotes improved healing after shoulder injuries and complaints such as arthritis and rotator cuff tendonitis.

• This bilateral support (can be worn on left or right shoulder) warms the shoulder while giving stability and joint flexibility to quicken the healing process. Made from soft neoprene, it can be worn all day for comfort against tendinitis, shoulder instability, shoulder dislocation and arthritis.
SPRAINED ANKLE

What is it?

A Sprained Ankle is pretty common in cricket. Glenn McGrath famously sprained his ankle by treading on a cricket ball during a game of football. This injury probably more than anything else contributed to England’s 2005 Ashes series win.

A Sprained Ankle is damage to the ligaments and soft tissues around the ankle, usually as a result of the ankle being twisted inwards. The ankle ligament and soft tissue damage produces bleeding within the tissues and an extremely painful, swollen ankle.

How can you prevent it?

Research has shown that bracing or taping the ankle can help to reduce the risk of a Sprained Ankle. The incidence of injury in people with taped ankles was 4.9 ankle sprains per 1000 participant games, compared with 2.6 ankle sprains per 1000 participant games in students wearing Ankle Braces. This contrasts with 32.8 ankle sprains per 1000 games in subjects that had no taping or bracing.

Because taping and strapping techniques often require application by a skilled physiotherapist, an Ankle Brace is often a more convenient alternative.

Treatment

Immediately following a Sprained Ankle you can follow the PRICE protocol - Protection with an Aircast Walker, Rest, Ice Therapy, Compression with a Cohesive Bandage and Elevation of the ankle to reduce swelling.

Rehabilitation with a Chartered Physiotherapist significantly improves the outcome following a Sprained Ankle. Wobble Board training improves balance and proprioception. Research has shown that patients with ankle instability who underwent Wobble Board training experienced significantly fewer recurrent sprains during a follow-up period than those who didn’t do Wobble Board training.

For a support to wear during your rehab, try the product below…

• **PhysioRoom.com Elite Knitted Snug Series Ankle Support** supplied with left and right foot gel pads has been specially designed to help provide equal compression and stable support to weak or injured ankles and prevents overuse of the ankle and retrogression of the ankle joint.

• Suitable for wearing on a daily basis the snug ankle support with gel pads can be used to relieve pain and stiffness in the ankle as well as a follow-up treatment for achilles ruptures.

• The Snug ankle support features a four-way stretch, breathable material to ensure of total comfort and a perfect fit. The ankle support uses an advanced German knitting technique which forms a three-dimensional shape that provides equal compression to your ankle, while the contoured gel pads provide extra protection that creates a massage effect to promote blood circulation, to relieve pain and help speed up recovery.
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