It only takes a few seconds of watching rugby before you realise why there might be injuries involved. The sheer velocity at which some players travel across the pitch and collide with each other means that problems are inevitable and unavoidable.

Rugby injuries occur more frequently during matches than during training. Due to the frequent physical contact during rugby the incidence of injury is relatively high, with hamstring muscle injuries, ankle sprains, head injuries, shoulder injuries and thumb injuries all common.

The injuries occur most often during collisions such as during tackling, rucking and mauling. Upper limb injuries occur frequently in rugby due to the ball handling and physical contact nature of the sport. Shoulder injuries such as collar bone fractures and Acromioclavicular sprains can lead to a prolonged injury lay off, as can thumb sprains and thumb dislocations.

Playing such a high-risk sport, it’s vitally important that you have the right information as well as the right solutions to your injury problems.

This PhysioRoom.com guide is intended to inform you of the common rugby injuries and how you can best avoid them.

We’ll also recommend some suitable products along the way.

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

- **What type do I need?** Rugby appropriate braces come in different shapes and sizes, but can usually be categorised in to 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.
What is it?

Full-time training in the professional Rugby Union era has resulted in the players being fitter and more mobile than ever before. The increased physical demands have led to an increase in the number of lower limb muscle injuries, particularly Hamstring strains, which was the most common injury to affect England’s 2003 World Cup winning squad.

During sprinting activities, the Hamstring muscle can be forcibly stretched beyond its limits and the muscle tissue becomes torn. A tear in a muscle is referred to as a strain and, depending on its severity, is classified as a first, second or third degree strain.

How can you prevent it?

A warm up prior to matches and training is thought to decrease muscle strain 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. Practising sport specific activities helps tune coordination and prepare mentally for competition.

Treatment

The immediate treatment of any muscle injury consists of the RICE protocol - rest, ice and compression and elevation (never apply ice directly to the skin). All injuries should be reviewed by a doctor or chartered physiotherapist. Depending upon the severity of the Hamstring injury, the leg must be rested from sporting activity for between a couple of weeks and 3 months.

For some compression/warm pants, check out the below product…

- The PhysioRoom.com core stability shorts feature an innovative cross design elastic support system and have been specifically designed for the treatment and prevention of sports hernia, Gilmore’s Groin, Pubalgia, Osteitis Pubis, hamstring injuries and groin and thigh injuries.

- The core stability shorts with an innovative cross shaped elastic support system can be used for all levels of sport especially where there is twisting and turning and repetitive movements. The coreshorts are ideal for using during a range of sporting activities such as football, rugby, hockey, tennis, basketball and dance.

- The core stability shorts have been specifically designed to assist the lower abdominal, pelvic and hip areas and provide stability to your core to enhance your performance as well as helping you to recover much faster. They reduce muscle vibration and provide compression to help provide physical support to the groin and pelvis. The lightweight, four-way stretch material improves movement and ensures that moisture is quickly wicked away from the skin, while the breathable material allows ventilation to evaporate any moisture.
Head injuries range from superficial facial injuries, scalp lacerations and broken noses to severe concussions. Some researchers have reported that they account for over 20% of all rugby union injuries.

How can you prevent them?

Rugby headgear is typically a soft helmet that covers the forehead, skull and ears. In Japan these items are compulsory during rugby union. Research has shown that headgear is effective in reducing the incidence of superficial head injuries, such as lacerations.

Treatment

All head injuries should be assessed by a doctor as soon as possible. Lacerations and broken noses can be dealt with by doctors in the emergency department. International Rugby Board (IRB) rules state that “a player who has suffered concussion shall not participate in any match or training session for a minimum period of three weeks from the time of injury, and may then only do so when symptom free and declared fit after a proper medical examination.”

To help tend and protect any cuts or wounds, try the below product:

- Every home should have a PhysioRoom.com Mini First Aid Kit. It’s the best value compact first aid kit on the market. It has enough space to carry everyday first aid kit and we’ve packed in everything you’ll need for basic first aid treatment. It’s perfect for holidays, carrying in the car, or in your sports bag.

- Ideal for the immediate first aid treatment of injuries. Keep the Mini First Aid Kit to hand in the event of an accident or incident. It’s ideal for the first aid treatment of wounds, grazes, lacerations, fractures, dislocations and sports injuries.

- The Mini First Aid Kit is a small zipped bag that is packed with first aid kit. The lightweight nylon material is shower proof and easy to wipe clean.
SPRAINED ANKLE

What is it?

A sprained ankle is one of the most common injuries caused by participation in sports, rugby included. It refers to soft tissue damage (mainly ligaments) around the ankle, usually caused when the ankle is twisted inwards.

As well as damage to the ligaments, the capsule that surrounds the ankle joint can also be damaged. The damage causes bleeding within the tissues, which produces a swollen ankle that can be extremely painful.

How can you prevent it?

Taping and bracing the ankle can help to reduce the risk of ankle sprains. Previous research has shown the injury incidence 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 compared with 32.8 ankle sprains per 1000 participant games in subjects that had no taping or bracing.

Treatment

In the first few days following an ankle sprain it is important to follow the RICE protocol - rest, ice, compression and elevation (never apply ice directly to the skin). Ice packs for a period of twenty minutes every couple of hours may help with the pain but pain-relieving medication may also be necessary. It is important not to put too much weight on the damaged ankle, so walking should be avoided if it is painful.

For some extra ankle support, check out the below product…

• The 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 daily, 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.
ACROMIO CLAVICULAR JOINT SPRAIN

What is it?

The Acromio Clavicular joint (AC joint) is part of the shoulder complex. It is situated at the outside point of the collar bone where it attaches to the front of the shoulder blade.

An AC joint sprain refers to damage to the ligaments of the joint. The AC joint ligaments are most commonly damaged through a fall onto the tip of the shoulder, although during rugby this force may come from a collision with an opponent in a tackle.

How can you prevent it?

Shoulder bracing and taping can reinforce the ligaments of the AC joint. Many rugby players find that the reassurance provided by a shoulder support can also be helpful. However, because of the collision nature of rugby, it is impossible to totally prevent these injuries.

Treatment

In the initial stage of the injury pain-relieving medication is helpful. Ice packs should be applied to the injured shoulder for 20 minutes every two hours (never apply ice directly to the skin).

A chartered physiotherapist can apply a taping technique, which will push the collar bone downwards, and in more severe AC joint sprains the shoulder may be put in a sling and rested. In more minor AC Joint sprains, where there is only a small amount of ligament damage, it may be possible to resume rugby activities in 7-10 days.

For a sling option, check out the below product...

- The PhysioRoom.com Deluxe Elite Arm Sling has been specially designed for use following a shoulder injury or shoulder surgery and features a foam pad to ensure of total comfort. The arm sling has an adjustable strap that provides extra immobilisation and hook and loop closures for easy adjustment.

- Made from soft cotton / polyester the envelope style deluxe elite arm sling with foam padding features an adjustable shoulder strap that immobilises the shoulder joint in the most comfortable position for healing. The hook and loop closures provide easy adjustment while the foam pad ensures of total comfort. Keeping the shoulder still and supported helps to relieve shoulder pain and encourages healing following shoulder surgery or a shoulder injury.
FRACTURE DISLOCATION OF THE THUMB

What is it?

This injury was described by Dr Edward Bennett, who suffered a fracture dislocation of his thumb while horse riding in 1885, and is often referred to as a ‘Bennett’s fracture’.

Anatomically it is a fracture of the joint surface between the thumb and the wrist and subsequent detachment of the deep ligaments, which normally stabilise the joint.

Because of the long-term problems and functional instability that can occur, many orthopaedic consultants advocate surgical fixation to repair a Bennett’s fracture dislocation of the thumb.

How can you prevent it?

Not a great deal. Get your chartered physiotherapist to tape your thumb, but even then, a fracture dislocation of the thumb may occur due to the collision nature of rugby.

Treatment

This is a nasty injury, with potential long term functional impairment of hand function. All fracture dislocations of the thumb should be assessed by an orthopaedic consultant.

In the first few days following a fracture dislocation of the thumb it is important to follow the RICE protocol - rest, ice, compression and elevation (never apply ice directly to the skin). Ice packs for a period of twenty minutes every couple of hours may help with the pain but pain-relieving medication prescribed by a doctor may also be necessary.

Surgery is often required for this injury and the surgeon may immobilise the thumb in a plaster. Once this is removed, some form of protection for the joint is necessary during the rehab period. A thumb stabiliser is helpful to protect the joint between exercise sessions with a physio.

For a thumb stabiliser option, check the below product...

- The PhysioRoom.com Wrist Brace with Thumb Splint is an adjustable, lightweight and removable wrist/thumb brace that can also be used as a protective cast. Protects the wrist and thumb following fractures and sprains while permitting full finger function. Also suitable for people suffering from carpal tunnel syndrome.

- It has a strong but lightweight plastic shell and spica that protect and immobilise the wrist and thumb, just as well as an old-fashioned plaster cast - except it’s much easier to wear, and can be removed to allow you to wash and carry out supervised exercises. This speeds up the healing process.

- Also has two dual stabilisers above and below the wrist, that are designed to support the wrist and prevent movement. Adjustable Velcro straps ensure a personalised fit.
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