

Playing Hurt vs. Playing Injured?

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There is a huge difference between being hurt and being injured. Athletes can play hurt. But if they are injured, they should give the body ample opportunity to recover. There are several factors that play into this recovery process, and in this column we will take a look at a few that are very obvious and some, not so much.

When an athlete gets an injury such as a tear, severe strain, sprain or even a dislocation, that part of the body will never be the same. It will get better and you will, in most cases, return back to full range of motion, but it will never be as good as it once was. A common injury found in many athletes is done to the shoulder. Maybe you will not have to have surgery, maybe you didn't tear the rotator cuff, but there will be definite and inevitable change in the stable nature of that area. As stated earlier, there are several factors that will impede the healing process. This includes age, nutrition is a big one, sleep deprivation and stress, to name a few. There is a lot to be said for trying to remain mobile and not completely immobilizing the area. Bed rest and immobility equals death in most cases. Sometimes you need to immobilize a tissue for a short time to give it a good head start, but then we need to get back in the groove so we do not lose vital muscle and range of motion.

Now, all of the previously listed healing deterrents should be quite obvious to you. However, this next one may have slipped under the radar. NSAIDS (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) have been proven to be a huge healing deterrent. There has been some really interesting data come out recently that people who take ibuprofen for a long period of time have really crappy tendon and muscle healing. Now, keep in mind that if you are under the care of a doctor and are being told to take this stuff, continue to do so. Just know that it is not good in the long run.

All the time, I get these "self-medicated" individuals who use this stuff after every workout, for every ache and pain, who are doing themselves more harm than good. If you have questions on this, talk to your doctor. But this will definitely impede the healing process. In every case, ice will help take out the inflammation in sore muscles and joints. As bad as they are to endure, ice baths have been shown to aid the healing process and recovery time. So, for muscle or tendon soreness, get plenty of sleep, eat right and use ice, not ibuprofen, whenever possible.

Article Courtesy of Albany Herald.com E-mail fitness columnist Kris Morrill, certified personal trainer and owner of World Camp Fitness in Albany, at kris@worldcampfitnessstraining.com.