

## Treat Your Sports Injuries with Acupuncture

From weekend warriors to professional athletes, most sports participants experience some sort of injuries. For those involved in sports activities regularly, injuries may be a way of life. Many sports enthusiasts and professionals alike are using acupuncture to treat injuries, as well as to enhance their athletic performance.

There are 147 joints in the body, and the range of injuries to those joints is as varied as the number of sports. The latest statistics show that baby boomers suffer from more than 1 million sports-related traumas annually. Sports injuries represent a significant health concern, accounting for 23 percent of all traumas, second only to motor vehicle injuries.

Most sports injuries fall into the category of sprains and strains. A sprain is a stretching or tearing of ligaments, while a strain involves muscles. Acute injuries occur suddenly, and are related to direct or indirect trauma. These injuries include fractures, sprains, strains, dislocations, subluxations, bursitis and nerve impingements. Chronic injuries occur over time, where muscles are either overused or are not used regularly.

When a trauma occurs to the body, it manifests in three distinct phases, known as acute, subacute and chronic. A main differentiating factor that separates these three phases is time. The acute phase begins at the initial onset of the injury and continues for 72 hours. During this time there may be swelling, bruising, pain and reduced range of motion. The subacute phase ranges from 72 hours after the initial injury to 90 days after. Most of the swelling may diminish, the pain

decreases and range of motion slightly increases. The chronic stage is defined as a prolonged length of pain or disability longer than 90 days. For those suffering from a chronic injury, there is a constant threat of susceptibility to re-injury.

Acupuncture is well known for its effectiveness in reducing most types of pain, including sports-related injuries. Acupuncture can be used to help decrease swelling, spasms and inflammation. Additionally, it can be used to control pain, increase range of motion and help promote healing. Because of the broad range of applications, acupuncture can be used during any of the phases of injury. The focus is not only to treat the injury but also to treat any underlying conditions that may predispose an individual to injuries. This is especially important when treating chronic or recurrent injuries that interfere with life activities or athletic performance.

As a holistic method of treatment, acupuncture addresses not only the affected joint or injury, but also the entire body. Acupuncture treats these other areas of stress on the body as well as the injured area, so that the healing process can be accelerated.

By utilizing the best from both systems and combining acupuncture with Western medicine, pain and recovery time for sports-related injuries may be significantly reduced. Remember, it is important to receive treatment as soon as possible after an injury in order to prevent a chronic condition from developing.

