

Foot Facts

Weekend Athletes: Don't Ignore Foot And Ankle Pain

(NAPSA)—For ankle sprains, heel pain and other problems that occur from sports activities, prompt treatment is the key to avoiding long-term complications, according to experts from the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons.

Overuse and insufficient stretching and warm-ups often cause such injuries, says Robert J. Duggan, DPM, FACFAS, an Orlando-based podiatric foot and ankle surgeon and sports medicine consultant to Walt Disney World's Wide World of Sports.

"At one time or another most athletes suffer sprained ankles and/or heel pain," said Duggan, "and these conditions should be promptly evaluated and treated to restore strength, range of motion and balance."

Weekend athletes are vulnerable to foot and ankle problems, which account for 27 percent of all sports injuries. Any sport that requires side-to-side motion, involves several participants in a confined area, or is played on an uneven surface presents a significant risk for ankle injuries.

Players who have experienced previous ankle sprains that have been inappropriately evaluated and treated may have persistent ankle pain, weakness and instability.

Proper evaluation is critical to establish an accurate diagnosis and initiate the right treatment for the injury, according to Richard T. Bouchè, DPM, FACFAS, a podiatric foot and ankle surgeon with the Virginia Mason Sports Medicine Clinic in Seattle.

"If symptoms persist, ankle surgery may be necessary to allow the athlete to continue to compete at the desired level. Performing ankle surgery through a conventional incision or through a small puncture incision with an arthroscope enables the podiatric foot and ankle surgeon to look inside the joint and assess the specific problem," Bouchè explained.



Tendonitis occurs from overuse and is common among weekend athletes who try to do too much too soon.

"If the Achilles is strained or stretched, it should be examined right away to help prevent a possible rupture that will require surgery and a lengthy rehab," said Duggan.

Certain types of foot and ankle injuries are more common in various sports:

Tennis: Quick stops and starts and lateral movements can cause ankle joints to become unstable, and Achilles tendon pain also is common among tennis players.

Softball: Sliding on the base paths can cause serious ankle sprains and fractures.

Basketball: On hard outdoor surfaces, players are vulnerable to ankle sprains, Achilles pain, stress fractures and heel pain.

Golf: Avid golfers are at risk for neuromas and hallux rigidus, a jamming and deterioration of the big-toe joint.

Running: Common foot and ankle problems for runners are heel pain, neuromas, tendonitis and stress fractures.

For free brochures on ankle sprains, heel pain and other foot and ankle problems/conditions and to locate a podiatric surgeon in your area, call ACFAS toll free at 1-888-THE FEET or visit the College's Web site, www.acfas.org.