

Playing Sports While Injured: What is the harm?

Sometimes people get injured while playing sports. Imagine you are running down the soccer pitch and you roll your ankle. You might think to yourself “*Is it okay to keep playing?*”.

There are many reasons why you might want to keep playing.

The pain isn't that bad... I can push through it.

It's the championship game, I can't stop playing.

What's the harm if I decide to keep playing?

We know that playing while injured can make the injury worse in the short-term. But we do not know what might happen in the future if someone plays while injured.

Are there long-term health problems from playing sports while injured?

To answer this question, researchers emailed a survey to cricket players in England and Wales. This survey had three main sections: 1) questions about injuries and playing, 2) questions about joint pain. It also asked the person if they have been diagnosed with osteoarthritis (a joint disease sometimes called the ‘wear and tear’ type of arthritis). The last section asked the person about 3) health-related quality of life. These questions looked at how a person’s physical and mental health affects their daily life.

What did the researchers find?

Over 2000 current and former cricket players responded to the survey. In this group, playing sport while injured was very common. Cricket players who played while injured had worse scores on health-related quality of life questions. They also were more likely to report having constant joint pain. This could mean that constant joint pain is having a negative impact on their daily life. Finally, cricket players who played while injured had a greater chance of being diagnosed with osteoarthritis.

What does this mean for me?

If you get injured while playing, your best option is to stop playing. As soon as you are able, you should go see a rehabilitation specialist to get your injury evaluated. From there, a plan can be made to get you back to playing as quickly and safely as possible. This is a good way to get healthy now and stay healthy in the future.

Lay abstract for:

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