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SPORTS

Overuse can cause ‘wear, tear’ injury

Editor’s note: *Amon Ferry, a Harvard sports medicine fellowship-trained orthopedic surgeon who is certified by the American Board of Orthopedic Surgeons, is the new sports-medicine columnist for Republic community sections. He has extensive experience working with athletes and professional teams.*

The most common injuries I see are related to overuse. Often chronic, these “wear and tear” type injuries aren’t the result of one specific traumatic event, but rather, a result of repetitive, low-grade trauma over time.

Whether playing a sport or with a physically demanding job, there is microscopic breakdown of the tissue in your bones, tendons and joints. If not given enough time to heal, the fine balance of breakdown and rebuilding of tissues leads to painful injuries.

Patients often do too much, too fast, and too often. Hitting the gym hard after a long period of inactivity can be damaging. Muscles and tendons, and core muscles that stabilize your spine and pelvis weaken. Pushing yourself into a new exercise routine without



**Sports
Medicine**
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proper form can overstress your body that’s unable to handle the extra strain.

Common overuse injuries are shoulder impingement, tennis elbow, runner’s and jumper’s knee, Achilles tendinitis

and shin splints. The diagnosis is often based on history and a physical exam. Occasionally, an X-ray or MRI is appropriate. It’s best to be evaluated by a sports-medicine specialist who is familiar with musculoskeletal injuries.

To prevent injury use the “10 percent rule:” do not increase either the time or intensity of a workout by more than 10 percent per week. Rest at least 24 hours between workouts to allow tissues to heal.

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