



INLINE SKATING INJURIES

Inline skating is a popular form of exercise that can burn as many calories as running or cycling while potentially placing less stress on the joints of the lower body. More than 17 million Americans participate in the sport. Unfortunately, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that more than 61,000 injuries from inline skating were treated in 2007.

What are the common inline skating injuries?

Most inline skating injuries are musculoskeletal in nature, including fractures and sprains. The wrist is the most frequently injured body part, making up 37 percent of all injuries, and two-thirds of wrist injuries are fractures. Head injuries comprise about 5 percent of inline skating injuries.

How are inline skating injuries treated?

Since most inline skating injuries are traumatic rather than overuse ones, many of them require more than just taking a break from skating. If the injury seems mild, appropriate first steps include using standard initial treatments for common sports injuries—like rest, applying ice or other cold therapies, use of a compression wrap or device, and elevating the injured body part to decrease swelling.

If there is obvious bone or joint deformity that could suggest a fracture or dislocation, the athlete should seek medical evaluation. Wrist fractures occasionally can be treated with reduction in the emergency room, but they often require surgical treatment. Other injuries might be treated with splints, braces, casts, or surgery, depending on the body part and severity.

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How can injuries be prevented?

Injuries are inevitable to some extent with inline skating, as falls are common. People unfamiliar with the sport should consider taking lessons, as novice skaters suffer about 14 percent of all injuries. Learning to stop, as well as balance and speed control, can be very important. In addition, those new to the sport should consider staying in safe environments and avoiding areas with traffic, hills, obstacles, and uneven surfaces that increase the risk of falls.

Wearing protective gear is essential to minimize serious musculoskeletal injuries. It has been shown that wearing wrist guards can reduce the number of wrist injuries by 87 percent; wearing elbow pads can decrease the number of elbow injuries by 82 percent; and wearing knee pads can reduce the number of knee injuries by 32 percent. While head injuries are fairly uncommon, skaters should wear helmets to prevent these serious injuries.

Skaters should also skate to their skill level. Mainly experienced skaters should use high-performance, five-wheeled skates, while beginner or intermediate-level skaters should consider three- or four-wheeled skates. The skates must fit snugly and be in good condition.

Expert Consultant

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Resources

National Safety Council. Inline Skating Safety.

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