

Winter Court Sports Can Present Problems for Feet, Ankles Part 1

With the pounding and movements that feet, ankles and the Achilles and other tendons around the ankle endure, court sports such as basketball, racquetball and tennis present unique problems for athletes, whether they're NBA types or weekend warriors. But from Shaq to the kid next door, preparation and common sense go a long way toward prevention.

Hard surfaces and sports calling for fast, lateral movements are two characteristics of indoor sports that can contribute to injuries. One of the most frequently encountered court injuries is the common ankle sprain that is often due to the lateral sudden shifting (especially in basketball) along with the potential for stepping on a competitor's foot.

Other court injuries are more shock-related, such as stress fractures in the foot or tibia. Stress fractures can be hard to detect and many times people with stress fractures will continue to play and delay the correct diagnosis.

If the stress fracture is in the metatarsal bone, the most frequent site for stress fractures, there can be swelling in the forefoot. But stress fractures can occur in any of the 26 bones of the foot without many symptoms. Another common site for basketball players is in the sesamoid bones under the big toe. Whether competing in court sports on an organized level or in everyday use, the foot should NOT hurt. If pain persists, consult a podiatric foot and ankle surgeon.

Don't try to play through the pain when it comes to basketball or other indoor court sports. All it takes is one jump or movement in an already injured area to cause a more devastating injury.

Here are some tips to consider:

1. Ankle braces for athletes are a must if you have a tendency to turn your ankle. Don't worry. New styled ankle braces are easy to put on and don't hinder running or jumping. Ask your foot doctor about this new technology.
2. If you are constantly having pain under the ball of your foot when running and jumping, the right insert can play a big role in preventing pain. Shock absorbing inserts can make you feel like your running on a cloud while reducing pressure and force to the foot. Ask your foot doctor about new shock absorbing inserts.
3. No! Not just any basketball shoe is good for basketball. Ask what shoes are best for your foot before forking out the big bucks for the latest shoe.

Next week we'll discuss some more potential court-sport type injuries along with valuable tips to keep you running strong this winter.