Sports Injury & Mental Health Awareness Webinar

SafeStrongSport Organization

Safe Strong Sport

OUR BODY IS REMARKABLE, ADAPTABLE

Us

Mental

- Unyielding

Physical

- Discipline

Competition

- Opportunity

Sports

- Passion

Striving for athletic success; **Without harming an athlete's health, Mentally and Physically**

PHYSICAL

ACUTE INJURY

Sudden Trauma

ACL Tears, Ankle Sprains, Fractures etc.

Deliberating

May Require Surgery/Physical Therapy

Symptoms

Immediate Pain, Swelling & Loss of Function

Immediate Action

Rest, Ice, Compress, Elevate

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OVERUSE INJURY

Cumulative

Repetitive Stress on Muscles & Joints

Silent but Deadly

Often take months to heal with chance to reoccur

Symptoms

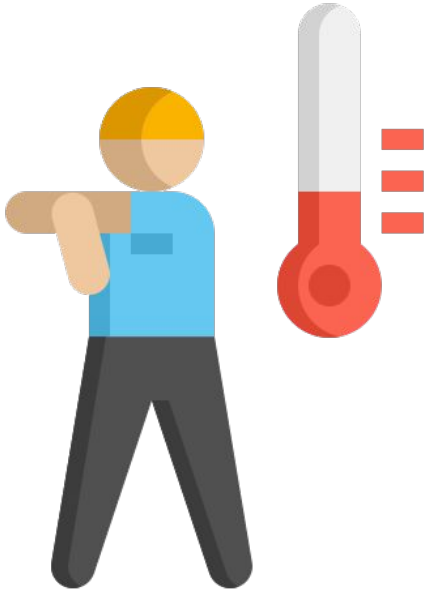
Minor Discomfort in Joints (Wrists, Elbow, Ankle) -> Pain/Swelling

Proactive

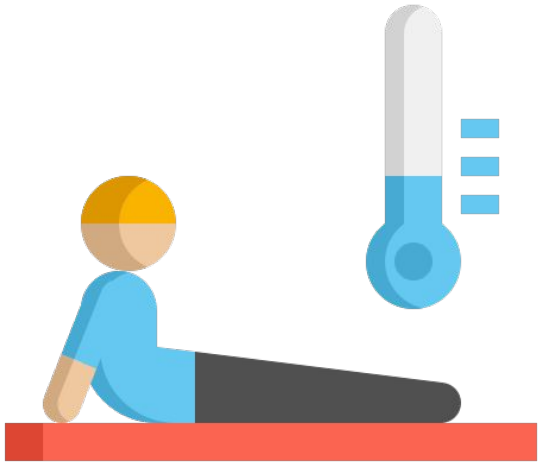
Good Communication with Coaches & Parents

Warm-up

- Increases blood flow
- Prevents Injury & promotes muscle connection
- Warm-up Exercises:
  - Side shuffles
  - High knees
  - Forward/Side lungs



Cool-down



- 5-10 min after a hit
- Removes lactic acid from muscles
- Reduces Soreness
- Cool-down exercises:
  - Butterfly
  - Touch your toes
  - Child's Pose

EQUESTRIAN

FORM MATTERS

- Lower chance of Injury
- Sustainability
- Improved Performance

COMMON MISTAKES

- The "Death Grip" with the Knees
- "Looking Down" (The Peripheral Trap)
- Rigid Arms and Locked Elbows
- Wrapped Lead Ropes or Reins

DEVELOPING GOOD FORM

- Listening to Coaches
- Discipline
- Prioritize Big Muscles

Common injuries

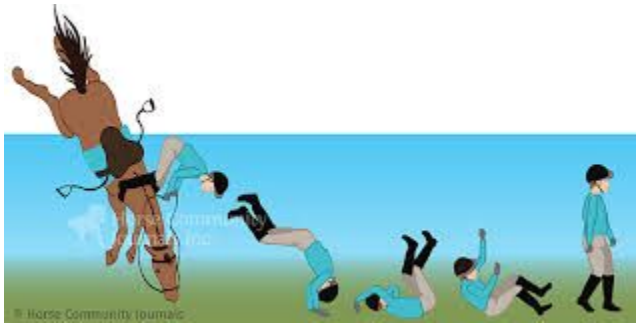
- Equestrian injuries occur both in the saddle and while "on the ground" (handling the horse).
  - **Head Injuries:** Concussions from falls are the most serious risk in the sport.
  - **Spinal Fractures/Bruises:** Compression injuries from landing on the back or tailbone.
  - **Adductor (Groin) Strains:** From the repetitive "gripping" motion used to stay balanced.
  - **Lower Back Pain:** Caused by the high-impact "jarring" of the spine during sitting trots or jumps.
  - **Foot/Hand Crush Injuries:** Occur on the ground (being stepped on or fingers caught in reins).

"Independent Seat": Core & Posture

- The best way to prevent a fall is to have a stable, "independent" seat.
  - **Pelvic Neutrality:** A rider must be able to keep their pelvis neutral despite the horse's movement. A "hollow back" or "slumped shoulders" makes the rider easy to dislodge.
  - **Deep Heels:** Keeping the heels down acts as a shock absorber for the ankles and knees, preventing the foot from sliding through the stirrup.
  - **Core Bracing:** The core shouldn't be "stiff," but "elastic"—able to absorb the horse's rhythm without the upper body swaying.

Safe Falling Technique

- Since you cannot always prevent a fall, you must train the body to survive one.
  - **Let Go of the Reins:** A common mistake is hanging on, which leads to "shoulder yanking" or the horse falling on top of the rider.
  - **Tuck and Roll:** Tuck the chin to the chest and pull the limbs in to protect the head and prevent broken arms.
  - **Push Away:** If the horse is falling, the goal is to push away to avoid being crushed.



The "Rider's Gym" (Off-Horse Train)

- Riding alone doesn't build the specific stability needed to prevent injury.
  - **Hip Mobility:** Tight hip flexors pull the pelvis out of alignment. Focus on "pigeon stretches" and hip circles.
  - **Adductor Strength:** Using a "ball squeeze" between the knees to strengthen the inner thighs.
  - **Single-Leg Balance:** Improves the ability to stay centered if the horse "spooks" or shies to one side.
  - **Back Extensor Strength:** To counteract the forward-leaning posture often found in jumping.

Essential Protective Gear

- **The Helmet (ASTM/SEI Certified):** Must be replaced after *any* impact, even if it looks fine. It should be snug enough not to move when you shake your head.
- **Safety Vests (Body Protectors):** Crucial for cross-country and jumping; they protect the ribs and internal organs from impact and crushing.
- **Safety Stirrups:** Designed to "break away" or release the foot if the rider falls, preventing them from being dragged.
- **Proper Footwear:** Boots with a distinct heel (at least 1 inch) to prevent the foot from slipping through the stirrup.

Ground Safety & Horse Awareness

Many injuries happen before the rider even gets in the saddle.

- **The "Kick Zone":** Never stand directly behind a horse or in its blind spot without making your presence known.
- **Leading Technique:** Never wrap a lead rope around your hand or wrist (danger of being dragged).
- **Stable Footwear:** Always wear hard-toed boots when grooming; "equestrian sneakers" do not protect against a 1,000lb hoof.

NUTRITION

CARBOHYDRATES

Break down into glucose, the body's main fuel source

PROTEINS

Build hormones and enzymes and repairs muscles and bones, main contributor to growth

FATS

Give the body energy through calories and help it absorb vitamin A, D, and E

FIBERS

Carbohydrates that cannot be digested; improves digestive system and lowers blood cholesterol

NUTRITION

FATS	20%
CARBS	50%
PROTEINS	30%

This is a rough estimate of general intake, and percentages can vary depending on circumstance.


"In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart."
—Anne Frank
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MENTAL

WIN

It lies

LOSS

on a thought

RECREATIONAL

- Participation & Inclusivity
- Few Competitive Opportunities
- Less Pressure to Improve

COMPETITIVE

- Build Discipline & Responsibility
- Lead to burnout/Injury
- Pressure to Perform to a Standard

[Chinese Skateboarder Zheng Haohao]

[U.S. gymnast Hezly Rivera]

[U.S. Track Quincy Wilson]

"ELITE"

"The context in which a young person trains and competes, rather than their performance."

(Mountjoy, 2008)

1

performance outcomes > psychosocial development, enjoyment, participation

2

involvement in sports > psychosocial and educational experiences, non-sports relationships

3

explicit/implicit goal of progression to elite, collegiate, or professional sports

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- “free” time spent travelling/practicing
- schoolwork and other extracurriculars
- unnecessary pressure/expectations

DEFINING BURNOUT

- Emotional and Physical exhaustion
- Reduced Level of Accomplishments
- Sport Devaluation

Table 2 Representative Sample Items

Variable	Sample item
Emotional/physical exhaustion	I feel emotionally drained from my swim team participation
Reduced athletic accomplishment	I am not peforming up to my ability in swimming
Sport devaluation	I don't care as much about my swim performance as I used to
Swim commitment	Do you want to keep participating on a swim team?
Benefits	How rewarding is swim team participation?
Costs	To what extent have you experienced costs associated with swimming?
Enjoyment	How fun is swim team participation for you?
Personal investments	How much effort have you put into swimming?
Alternative attractiveness	Compared to swim team participation, there are other things I could do which would be more enjoyable
Social constraints	The people most important to me would be disappointed with me if I were to quit swim team participation
Swim identity	Swimming is the only thing important in my life
Perceived control	I have a say in what I do when participating in swimming

ADVERSE EFFECTS

PHYSICAL

Chronic fatigue, strength and stamina loss, and increased probability of injuries.

AFFECTIVE

Low mood, lack of enthusiasm, and even hostility to the training environment

COGNITIVE

Difficulty concentrating, decreased school performance, and poor sports performance.

THE ONLY **TREATMENT** TO BURNOUT IS **REST**

"RESULTS > EFFORT"

- EXCEEDINGLY high expectations
- OVEREMPHASIS on results
- INAPPROPRIATE pressure to perform

PARENTS, YOU ARE YOUR CHILD'S BIGGEST SUPPORT!

AFTER A LOSS...

- vulnerability
- empathy > logic
- active listening
- feedback with sensitivity

Influence of peers

Social support

- Psychological well-being
- Enjoyment to sport
- Self-worth

Harmful experiences

- Bullying
- Isolation
- Cyberbullying

Universal Injury Prevention Checklist

- **Checklist for Athletes:**
  - Do I warm up and cool down every session?
  - Am I using proper technique?
  - Do I get enough rest?
  - Is my nutrition supporting my activity?
  - Am I wearing the right protective gear?
  - Do I communicate pain or discomfort to my coach/parent?

General Principles of Injury Prevention (All Sports)

- **Warm-up & Cool-down:** Essential for all athletes to prepare muscles and prevent strains.
- **Proper Technique:** Reduces risk of both acute and overuse injuries.
- **Rest & Recovery:** Prevents burnout and chronic injuries.
- **Nutrition & Hydration:** Fuels performance and aids recovery.
- **Protective Equipment:** Helmets, pads, mouthguards, etc.
- **Communication:** Athletes, coaches, and parents should discuss pain or discomfort.

THANK YOU

Q&A