Summer Sports Rehabilitation

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(This article is not meant to diagnose or prescribe treatment for any particular condition. Please consult with a qualified Chiropractor or MD in individual cases.)

Summer vacation has arrived, and all of you who have sat on your gluteus maximus all year, have not decided to become an Olympic athlete overnight. It is important for you weekend warriors to understand how to rehabilitate your body once it has been injured. The Pyramid of Recovery defines a five-step program for returning an athlete to their sport, no matter what the age or level of the player. At the heart of this system lies the fact that until a solid foundation has been established over time, the athlete cannot and must not continue to the next level, lest he/she jeopardize their recovery.

Step One: Flexibility/Strength Training

Step Two: Proprioception

Step Three: Endurance

Step Four: Motor Re-Learning

Step Five: Return to Sport

Every athlete will react differently to an injury and will recover at a different pace. The general rule, however, allows one week of rehabilitation for every week that a person has been away from the sport or activity. We can utilize the following algorithm to determine the average expected recovery period:

AREA OF INJURY VS. TIME TO RECOVERY

Skin, 2-3 weeks

Muscle, 4-6 weeks

Tendon/Ligament, 6-8 weeks

Bone, 12-16 weeks

Nerve, 12-18 months

This model can be applied to any person attempting to recover to pre-injury function. Three phases define the therapeutic process: first, when a patient presents to a Chiropractic office in agonizing pain, that patient is said to be in the acute phase, where we aim to reduce pain and bring the person to a basic comfort level.

Treatment frequency at this time must be intense, in order to decrease the inflammation that has

resulted from the injury. At the sub-acute phase, within two weeks of initial presentation, more aggressive therapies may be used in order to return the body to the path of health.

Finally, in the maintenance and preventative phase, the primary complaint has been dealt with, and now secondary compensatory issues may be addressed.

A successful rehabilitation involves the doctor, but more important, involves the reclaiming of control and responsibility by the patient over his/her own body.

Through education and emotional commitment, the client understands what he/she must do beyond the Chiropractic treatment itself, in order to restore and maintain “well-ness.” Avoiding denial or a co-dependent relationship with the doctor insures a more lasting recovery.

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