

Are You Prone to ACL Injury?

Important things for athletes and sports organizers to know about this devastating knee injury. *by Bill Romaniello*

AN ESTIMATED 200,000 ACL tears occur in the United States each year. It's worth pointing out that, over the last ten years, ACL (Anterior Cruciate Ligament) injuries in female athletes have increased dramatically.

In fact, women athletes are now four to eight times more likely to tear their ACL than their male counterparts.

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While all injuries cannot be avoided, there is a way to decrease risk of a non-contact ACL injury. Time must be spent on proper training to insure good quadriceps and hamstring strength, good balance, and proper running form and jumping technique, as all are essential to reducing the risk of injury.

Treatment of an ACL Injury

Immediate treatment of an ACL injury consists of “R.I.C.E.”—that



Women athletes are actually four to eight times more likely to tear their anterior cruciate ligament than their male counterparts.

is Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation—for the first 24 to 48 hours. Ice should be applied for 15 to 20 minutes every few hours to control pain and swelling. Typically, athletes suffering from an ACL injury are unable to participate in sports activities. Furthermore, they should seek medical advice from a certified athletic trainer or an orthopedic specialist.

Unfortunately, surgery is often required to fix a torn ACL. Post-operative care typically will last six to 10 months before athletes can return to their sport. The primary goal ear-

ly in the rehabilitation process is to decrease swelling, increase mobility and strength while the ACL graft heals. In the later stages of rehabilitation, focus turn to more functional and dynamic exercise, like running, jumping and plyometrics.

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