

# Injury & Prevention



## Doctors Tip

*"Prevention is better than cure. Plan ahead for a competition. Inspect the implements to be used, allow for weather conditions and make sure the athletes are well prepared."*

Dr Tim Barbour is the Official Olympic Athletics Doctor



## INJURY PREVENTION

Risk assessment

**Low** - No or minimal risk of injury

**Medium** - some or slight risk of injury

**High** - a real risk of injury

In general, throws are likely to be more of an injury risk than other events with perhaps the exception of Pole Vault. Teachers and coaches should assess the likelihood of injury and act accordingly.

Hazards in athletics include:

**Objects** - such as hurdles, throwing implements, cages, track surfaces and landing areas such as mats.

**Environment** - such as wet tracks/surfaces in throwing or jumping. Weather conditions including cold and heat. The importance of a specific warm up and cool down should be considered.

Risk assessment involves identifying the hazard and who may be harmed including athletes, officials, spectators and so forth, evaluating the risk, whether low, medium, or high and taking

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action. Where the evaluation is medium or high, the aim must be to reduce risk to a low level and, making a report and recommendations that will eliminate the risk from future events.

Accidents can and do happen in athletics, they occur for direct reasons as in falling or landing awkwardly, or indirect causes as in overuse or training at an intense level. To reduce the risk of accidents in athletes you may have to consider modifying events such as using lighter throwing equipment until a good level of technique is reached, or alternative equipment e.g. a soft bar in High Jump

Consider the importance of replacing or repairing equipment, and ensuring throwing/landing areas are safe, Reprogramming events so that the javelin/ hammer does not take place at the same time as the 1500m for example. Particular care needs to be taken with young athletes whose muscles and bones are still developing. Body tissue can grow at different rates (especially in growth spurts) therefore training load would need to be monitored carefully to prevent injuries.

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## DEALING WITH INJURIES

Teachers should have First Aid qualifications so that appropriate action can be taken.

Athletes should gain professional advice if major injuries are sustained for example, bleeding from head injuries, significant swelling or bruising and severe pain.

Always follow the PRICED regime:

**P** – prevention

**R** – rest the injured part, do not try to "run through" the pain

**I** – ice or cold compress to reduce swelling. Do not apply heat

**C** – compression e.g. strapping to reduce swelling

**E** – elevate injured area to prevent and reduce swelling

**D** – diagnosis by a medical specialist as soon as possible

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## REHABILITATION

A medical specialist should give athletes the all clear before recommencing training or competing. It may be advisable to limit and modify training in the early stages to allow the athletes body to adjust back into training. Returning to full training too early may cause re-injury and a lack of motivation.

This can be achieved by completing cross-training activities to maintain fitness (bike/pool), reducing the number of training sessions in the first few weeks, reducing the number of repetitions performed or reducing the weight of throwing implements. It is advisable to ask the athlete how they are feeling and to watch for signs of discomfort or fatigue.

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## COMPETITION DAY

Prior to competition days or events taking place, always check that the contents of your First Aid Kit are replenished and any out of date items are replaced.

Below is a list of items that should be contained in a first aid kit

- Crepe bandages
- Gauze swabs
- Tape
- Assortment of Dressings and Band-aids
- Cotton buds
- Antiseptic solution
- Sterile water or saline for wound cleaning
- Ice bags
- Hand torch
- Arm sling
- Sunscreen

A sheet containing relevant phone numbers – organisers, local hospitals and emergency numbers.

Remember, the most important thing is to be aware of the risks and keep an eye out for athletes who are using equipment incorrectly or for the first time. The training of officials is very important as is informing the athletes of where assistance can be sought for first aid treatment.