

Common Overuse Injuries

The most common overuse injuries, according to coaches, physical therapists and orthopedic surgeons:

Shin Splints: Painful damage to muscles, tendons or bones in the front of the lower leg caused by extensive running, running on hard surfaces or running in shoes with insufficient support.

Stress Fractures: A break or crack in the bone caused by repetitive stress -- usually pounding on the basketball court, football or soccer field, or on the track. High school athletes are experiencing a marked increase in stress fractures not just to the legs, but also to the wrists, collarbones and arms.

Knee Pain: Abnormal tugging of the muscle on the undersurface of the kneecap leading to quadriceps fatigue and pain. Particularly common in sports that involve running and weight training, chronic knee pain is the No. 1 chronic pain complaint in young female athletes.

Heel Injury: Inflammation where the Achilles' tendon attaches to the heel bone, common in athletes in sports that emphasize running -- such as soccer, football and basketball.

Little Leaguer's Elbow: A phrase used to encompass overuse injuries to the elbow cartilage or elbow bone, the result of young throwers who overwork their arms. Doctors across the country are seeing an exponential rise in Tommy John (elbow ligament replacement) surgery among young athletes.

Chronic Tendinitis: Tendons tear and swell even after an original injury heals due to repeated trauma and overuse. When the swelling becomes chronic, the tendon may hurt all the time.