

CRICKET INJURIES

Cricket is now recognised as one of the leading sports across the world. It is no longer a Sunday afternoon knock about but a hugely successful sport with elite athletes competing at very high levels.

Cricket is both very skilful and physically demanding due to the length of the game and the sudden changes of pace within the game. One minute there can be very little activity and the next the fielder can be racing across the field in an attempt to stop the ball reaching the boundary. The batsman can also have a speedy change of pace as he tries to slip in a quick single after being fairly inactive for a while.

This sudden change of pace can put a lot of strain on muscles and soft tissue as they try and adapt to sudden change in length.

If inadequately prepared the muscles can become injured and strained. Because of this it is important to keep warmed up during the game by moving about to try and keep the muscles warm and flexible. And not stand in your typical cricketers pose with folded arms and weight all one leg!

Injuries on the cricket field tend to fall into two categories; repetitive/overuse and acute.

Repetitive type injuries can come on as a result of repeated movements typical of a bowler, batsman or wicket keeper, when the same movements are done over and over again. The fast bowler in particular is susceptible, due to the twisting and loading placed on the spine when bowling. This can cause compression of the delicate structures in the spine and can also cause micro tears to the soft tissues in the spine. This over time can lead to a more significant injury.

Impingement problems can develop in the shoulder when a tendon can become irritated or pinched due to repeated compressive forces place on it when bowling. This can lead to pain and inflammation and then impaired function. Early management of these injuries is very important to prevent a chronic problem developing.

Acute injuries are inevitable in cricket. With ball speeds now hitting the 100mph mark, contact injuries are increasing. And not only are fingers and thumbs vulnerable to fracture but even protective helmet straps it seems!! All hand injuries should be taken seriously and it is important to ensure full mobility, strength and function are returned before resuming the game.

To help prevent injuries in cricket it is important to ensure fitness levels are good enough to enable the body to cope with the sudden change of pace within the game. Have good flexibility in the muscles to allow stretches for catches and stopping boundary balls. And have good hand eye co-ordination to ensure quick reactions as the game of cricket seems to be moving into another dimension!

Su Barry BSc (Hons)., MCSP

