

Midwest Physical Therapy & Sports Center



Moving you to wellness.

How Young Athletes Can Prevent Injury, Build Strength—Safely!

This is the season in which young athletes are working hard to prepare for fall activities. Taking simple precautions can help most athletes prevent serious injury and heat stress, according to physical therapists at Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center (MWPT) of Lincoln.

Stretching is Key

Studies show that injuries are most likely to occur either at the beginning of a game or workout when muscles are cold and tight or at the end of an activity when they are fatigued. Beginning an activity at a very low intensity for a **warm up** and then **stretching** the specific muscles that will be used during the activity can lower the risk of sports injuries. Learning to listen to your body so that you stop exercising before complete exhaustion sets in will also decrease injury risk.

“Stretching helps prevent injury, especially pulled muscles. It also reduces soreness in muscles early on. Holding a stretch for 30 seconds will increase flexibility, where as a typical 10-second hold might warm you up a little, but it will not increase your flexibility. Athletes need to be flexible to a point to reduce injuries,” according to MWPT physical therapist John Linn.

Building Strength, Lifting Weights

Properly lifting weights can build strength, however, some people do not recommend weight lifting for younger athletes under age 13 or 14, says Darci Fanning, MWPT physical therapist.

For these young athletes, Fanning warned against aggressive conditioning. Appropriate conditioning for these younger competitors is defined as supervised and instructed weightlifting with higher reps and lower weights no more than two times per week or having a sporting activity no more than three times per week, either practice or play times. Rest days are important between preparation and participation events.

The staff Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center works with young athletes to safely build strength, speed and agility. The clinic offers a wide range of services including pre- and post-surgical therapy, general orthopaedics, sports rehabilitation and aquatic physical therapy.

Heat Stress

Physical therapist Justin Hash provides these tips for preventing heat stress:

- Children are more susceptible to extreme heat since they have a greater surface area to body mass ratio. This means they absorb more heat on a hot day.
- Children should be well hydrated before starting any physical activity and they should drink liquids periodically during activities even if they do not feel thirsty.
- Drink 16 to 32 ounces of cool fluids each hour.
- Do not drink liquids containing caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of sugar since these cause you to lose more body fluid. Water and Sports beverages are the most appropriate.
- Sports beverages can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat.
- High humidity decreases the evaporation of sweat and can make it harder for the body to cool off.

Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center works closely with physicians to provide athletes strength enhancement and rehabilitation care. The center has two locations, 6900 "A" Street and 3901 Pine Lake Road. For more information, call: 436-2535 or check out MidwestPhysicalTherapy.com

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About the Authors and Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center:

John Linn, PT, ATC graduated from Doane College in Crete, NE, in 1997 with a B.S. degree. He received his Master's in Physical Therapy from the Mayo School of Health Related Sciences in Rochester, MN, in 2001, and has worked at Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center since graduation. John is a Certified Athletic Trainer and was the Athletic Trainer for the Lincoln Capitols. John's special interests in physical therapy include the lower extremity and gait, as well as the use of orthotics. Personal interests include a variety of sports, with a particular interest in running. John completed the Twin Cities Marathon in 2000 and the Chicago Marathon in 2001.

Darci Fanning, PT, CSCS: Fanning is a 1999 graduate from the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, where she received her Master's in Physical Therapy. She also earned a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist. Special interests professionally include hand therapy and splinting, shoulder rehabilitation, sports injuries and general orthopaedics. Darci has been employed at Midwest Physical Therapy since 1999 and oversees the technician duties at the 70th and A Street location.

Justin Hash, PT, CSCS: Hash is a 2003 graduate of the Mayo School of Health Sciences, where he received a Master's of Physical Therapy degree. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in Exercise Science in 2001. A native of Lincoln, he graduated from Lincoln East High School. Justin is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist and enjoys working with a variety of patients with a special interest in sports injuries. Hash joined the Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center staff in 2003.

About Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center: Established in 1996, Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center has grown from a single clinic to three locations in the Lincoln area with eight physical therapists and two physical therapist assistants. Owner Renee Tewes opened the clinic to provide the highest quality rehabilitation care to physical therapy patients. Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center is the official physical therapy center serving the Lincoln Stars and Lincoln Saltdogs. For more information, please call: 436-2535 or go to www.midwestphysicaltherapy.com

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