



Tips From the Training Room

For more information contact the athletic training staff at
Towson Sports Medicine, 410-828-4TSM (4876).

Martial Arts Injuries

Introduction:

Martial Arts is growing in popularity, it is estimated that in the United States there are 8 million participants. There are many different forms of martial arts including karate, kung fu, jujitsu, kickboxing, judo, and tae kwon do. Martial arts can offer many benefits including self-defense, building self-discipline, improving cardiovascular fitness, strength, speed, and flexibility. A wide variety of injuries can occur, often the injuries are dependent on the style of martial art that is being performed.

Most Common Injuries:

Overuse:

Overuse injuries typically occur in non-contact styles of martial arts. These types of injuries occur due to repetitive stress placed upon a specific area. Training too hard or too often can also be responsible for these injuries.

Concussion:

Styles of martial arts that focus on striking and throwing are more likely to result in concussion. Some common symptoms that occur include headache, dizziness, nausea, balance problems, poor concentration, and memory problems. Symptoms can last for several minutes up to days, weeks, months and sometimes longer in more severe cases. An athlete with symptoms of a concussion should be immediately removed from participation and evaluated by a health care professional. The athlete should not be allowed to return to play until they are cleared by a qualified health care professional. No athlete with a suspected concussion should be allowed to return the same day.

Head/Eyes/Ear/Nose:

Most injuries to the face are minor injuries such as cuts, bruises, and lacerations. However, serious injuries, such as fractures of the nose, face, and skull can occur. Injuries to the eye such as orbital fractures or hyphema, as well as a displacement or loss of tooth can occur.

Neck:

Styles of martial arts for example jujitsu, judo and mixed martial arts allow choking techniques that can result in loss of consciousness. It is important to understand the risks associated with each style of martial arts and learn proper techniques. The most common injuries to the neck include bruising and abrasions.

Extremities:

Injuries include cuts, bruises, sprains, and strains. Fractures and dislocations may occur in styles of martial arts that use throwing and joint locking techniques.

Skin:

Athletes can be prone to skin infections during contact sports such as martial arts and wrestling. These injuries need to be evaluated and treated by a health care professional before being allowed to return to play.

Risk Factors:

- Lack of Supervision
- Use of Improper Technique
- Using excessive force
- Inexperience
- Overtraining

Prevention:

- Before participating have a pre-participation physical exam and clearance evaluation
- Educate yourself on the different styles of martial arts and their inherent risks before selecting the one to pursue
- Practice martial arts always under direct supervision from an experienced teacher
- Perform proper warm-up and cool-down
- Wear the appropriate protective equipment in your style of martial arts, i.e. headgear, mouth guard, gloves, groin protector, chest protector, padding, and/or bracing
- Discuss any concerns about injuries or strategies for prevention injuries with a sports medicine professional or athletic trainer
- Understand the signs and symptoms of concussions

Websites:

United States Martial Arts Federation: www.usmaf.org/us

World Martial Arts Association: www.wmaa.com

Martial Arts Injuries: www.STOPSportsinjuries.org

Martial arts injury overview: www.sportsinjurybulletin.com/archive/martial-arts.html

Concussion CDC Website: www.cdc.gov/concussion/