

NO PAIN NO GAIN

Pain is ... well, a “pain” for athletes. It can compromise your training routine and keep you out of the sports that you love. If you ignore it or push through it, you can cause more damage and increase the time you will need to recover. We have all heard the “No Pain, No Gain” or the “Pain is Weakness Leaving the Body” adages, but these motivational quotes can give young athletes, or, for that matter, athletes of all ages, the wrong idea. Eventually this can lead to significant injuries that require extended down time to heal.

So how do you know what is “normal pain” vs. “abnormal pain”? What is unimportant muscle and joint discomfort or an injury waiting to get worse? Here at the Nirschl Orthopaedic Center for Sports Medicine and Joint Reconstruction we follow the pain phases of our founder, renowned orthopaedic surgeon, Dr. Robert Nirschl.

These guidelines help athletes, parents, coaches, and trainers to better understand the type and intensity of pain they are dealing with, how to adjust their training routines or when it is time to follow-up with a sports medicine physician.

NIRSCHL PAIN PHASES

Phase 0: No pain or soreness.

Phase 1: Soreness after activity, usually gone in 24 to 48 hours

Phase 2: Mild stiffness and soreness before activity which disappears with warm-up.

No pain during activity, but mild soreness after activity that disappears within 24 to 48 hours

Phase 3: Mild/moderate stiffness and soreness plus **mild pain during activity which does not alter activity.

**Phase 4: Pain during activity which alters activity.

**Phase 5: Pain with activities of daily living.

**Phase 6: Constant pain even at rest and/or disturbs sleep.

**These pain phases should be considered indications of injury. It is not beneficial to work through this type of pain; check with your therapist or doctor.

If an exercise or activity causes Phase 3 pain or more, you need to modify or adjust the activity if possible or stop the activity completely, and work in a “pain free” range.

Some ideas are as follows:

- a. Decrease the length of time of the exercise/activity and/or
- b. Decrease the intensity at which you are performing the activity
- c. Decrease the speed you are performing the exercise/activity
- d. Alter the technique of the activity

If you are unable to find a “pain free” way to complete your exercise, it is a good indication that there is an underlying injury that needs addressing. It is important that you follow up with a sports medicine physician to get an accurate diagnosis. A physical therapist will design a program to get you back to your full work out without further damage.

Remember “No Pain, No Gain” can sometimes put you on the sidelines for a very long time. Listen to what your body is telling you and take the proper actions to keep you healthy and strong. The pain phases may be a helpful guide. If you are unsure check with your doctor.

Nirschl Orthopaedic Center is a leader in sports medicine and general orthopedic services. In addition Virginia Sportsmedicine Institute physical therapy has been rated one of the top sports medicine clinics in the area. If you have an orthopaedic injury, schedule an appointment with one of our doctors today by calling our

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