

Orthopedic surgeon: Athletes should compensate for age in daily workouts

Any doctor will say that exercise is good for you, but there is a down side. As the athlete ages, he or she is more prone to injury.

“Much like a car, as we get older and stay active the body starts to wear down,” said Dr. William D. Cox Jr., a Crystal Lake orthopedic surgeon. “We have to make Compensations.”



Cox

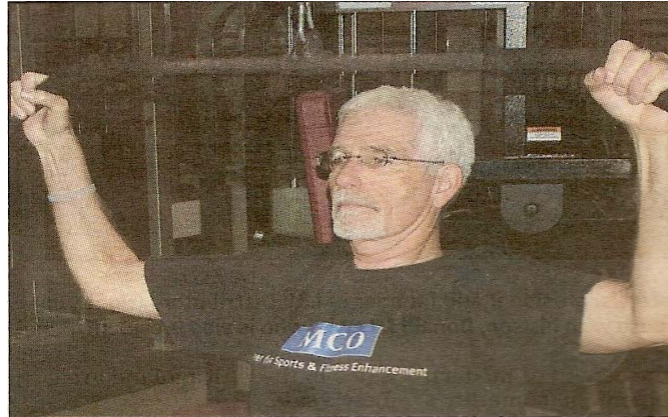
Prior to founding McHenry County Orthopaedics of Crystal Lake with a partner, Dr. Warren Jablonsky, in 1994, Cox worked as the assistant team physician for several collegiate teams as well as the Washington Redskins. As a specialist in sports medicine and arthroscopic surgery-and his own experience as a man of 45- he said he sees a dividing line at about the age of 40.

“I think part of it is these people have been intensely involved in sports growing up, and the body reacts to repeated stress. Look around the gym. You’ll see many of the people over 40 are working around knee and shoulder issues.”

However, the recovery time is shorter for a lifetime athlete, he said, because he’s in better shape to begin with.

Cox pointed out as an example one of his patients, Chuck Naughton, of Crystal Lake, 64, an amateur bicycle racer, who competes in more than a dozen races a year in the Midwest. Last winter Naughton had five surgeries: to his knees, left shoulder and both wrists. Cox said he was amazed how fast Naughton recovered.

“I have a good orthopedic



Chuck Naughton, 64, of Crystal Lake works out on a weight machine at Centegra’s Health Bridge Fitness Center in Crystal Lake. Naughton believes he recovered quickly from recent surgeries because he stays fit and exercises regularly.

surgeon and a good physical therapist,” Naughton said. “And one of the secrets of my success is I do yoga every morning.”

Some sports injuries will heal with home treatment.

“Tennis elbow, tendonitis, shin splints... you have to give them relative rest, but not complete rest,” Cox said. “Try stretching and using ice for inflammation; never directly on the skin, always use a cloth. The rule of thumb is, if you don’t see improvement within two to three weeks of home treatment, it might be something more serious.”

Cox said, when he is called for consultation, several injuries show up more frequently.

- Ankle sprains come as the result of a majority of sports and many physical activities. In the most serious cases, the doctor will place the ankle in a brace and order physical therapy.

- Next common is a meniscal tear, or “torn cartilage” in the knee. It is an injury to one or both of the “shock absorbers” located in the knee. It’s caused by twisting and jumping activities, including basketball

and soccer. If it is a significant

tear, it will require arthroscopic surgery. The torn part of the cartilage might need trimming or it might require suturing.

“Lower extremity injuries are more common than upper extremity injuries,” Cox said, “simply because we walk on our legs and not our arms.”

- Another frequent sports injury is to the anterior cruciate ligament [ACL], a connective tissue that goes down the center of the knee. Injury is caused by twisting the knee, and common sports are basketball and soccer. Patients will hear a pop when the injury occurs, followed by significant swelling of the knee.

If an active person involved in a sport that requires pivoting and jumping wants to continue that activity, surgery to reconstruct the ligament is usually recommended.

- A fourth is rotator cuff injuries. The tendons surrounding the ball-and-socket joint in the shoulder tear away from the bone, restricting movement. People who play sports that require a full range of motion at the shoulder – weight

Tips on Injuries:

- Shed poor lifestyle habits. Keep your body in the best condition possible so it has the utmost ability to repair itself. This includes stopping smoking, proper nutrition and adequate sleep.

- Resume physical activity. Complete rest is actually detrimental to healing. Choose activities or exercises that increase metabolism but do not cause harm to the injured area. If you have an injury to the Achilles tendon, running would be difficult, but you might still be able to walk, swim, do house or yard work.

- Treat injuries aggressively. Oral anti-inflammatory medicine or cortisone injections will help with pain but won’t promote healing. Physical therapies, including electrical stimulation and a well-supervised exercises program, will increase circulation to the injured area and strengthen it, making it less susceptible to injury in the future.

- Don’t fear the doctor. Surgery is usually not required for most sport injuries. Orthopedic surgeons would recommend surgery only if absolutely necessary or after other treatments have failed to alleviate the symptoms.

-Source: Dr. William D. Cox Jr.

lifters, volleyball, baseball and softball players – might suffer this fate. Treatment is normally physical therapy if the tendons are still partially intact. If the tear is complete, arthroscopic surgery might be advised.