

## Injury Prevention on the Employee Playing Field

NASA's sports season is upon us. A recent article in the Washington Post relates a study, which concluded that one of every 10 Americans would visit the Emergency Room each year. This year, close to nearly one-third of athletes will suffer a sports-related injury requiring the attention of a doctor.

According to the American College of Sports Medicine, up to one-half of the injuries that are sustained in organized sports are easily preventable. Many injuries are due to overuse of weak bones and undeveloped muscles. Even minor injuries can lead to chronic nagging pain and predispose the athlete to more severe injuries. Strains, sprains, pulled muscles or a broken bone can lead to the end of a season and undesired time away from work.



**Fitness, physical conditioning and training:** Coaches should have a general knowledge of the role fitness plays in player well-being. Before you even set foot in a competitive sports arena, make sure you are in proper physical condition. Training methods should be geared toward the strength, endurance and flexibility requirements of a particular sport. Proper training for athletes should begin one to two months before the given season begins. Each week, there should be a gradual increase of 10% for time, distance and repetitions required to be competitive in the sport. Even if one is fit, to avoid injury, each practice session and game should be preceded by 5 to 10 minutes of warm-up exercises and followed by a cool down period.

**Equipment:** With the rate of injuries on the rise, many organizations have passed strict rules regarding the safety of equipment and tougher safety rules for contact sports. You should be aware of these rules and help coaches and officials enforce them. This equipment should not be altered in any way that will defeat the purpose. Coaches should be aware of the latest protective and safety equipment and insist that all the athletes under their supervision wear it in its proper way.

**Mishap:** Coaches and fellow players should have the ability to handle a medical emergency if one should occur. Knowledge of basic first aid is advisable. Means to summons an ambulance is necessary. Make sure the injury is properly reported to the NASA clinic and safety organization if it is a NASA sanctioned event.



### Finally:

Employee participation in sports could be a great opportunity to build self-esteem, self-discipline and leadership skills for the individual and *esprit de corps* for the team. Make sure an injury does not negate the benefits.