

# Prevention Of Injuries In Figure Skating

By Julie Ann Keen, RN

Sports injuries can generally be classified into two types: acute and overuse. Most commonly, figure skaters incur overuse injuries. These types of injuries also are considered to be the most preventable.

Injuries of the overuse type seen in sports are: tendonitis, bursitis, strains, stress fractures, and shin splints. In order to avoid overuse injuries, the figure skater can use a variety of strategies to prevent these types of injury. Those strategies are the intent of this article and are as follows:

## 1. Off-Ice Conditioning

The goals are to promote body awareness, encourage proper body alignment, eliminate muscle imbalances, and to prevent injury. Off-ice conditioning should consist of stretching exercises, balanced strengthening of all muscle groups, and promoting overall endurance.

This type of sports conditioning will encourage proper body alignment and decrease muscular imbalances that often lead to injury. Initially, off-ice training should be done under the direct supervision of a trained professional.

Improperly performed exercises can lead to unnecessary injury as well. It is preferred that the exercise be as specific as possible geared for the figure skater. Frequency of exercise should be tailored to goals, age, ability, and timed for the competitive year.

Exercise should begin slow and build as the competitive year progresses. Avoid trying to do too much at one time. Listen

to your body and stop when you are tired or exercise becomes painful.

## 2. Pacing Training Time & Intensity

Many injuries occur when the pace of training time is increased too quickly. Often the skater increases ice time and intensity when school is over and the summer begins.

Be aware that a rapid intensity in training can lead to overuse injuries. It is far better to build in training intensity as the season progresses. Alternating training of different types of skating maneuvers on the ice can lead to better training strategies.

Avoid working on difficult jumps or tricks the entire session. It is better to work on a variety of elements and balance the workout.

## 3. Adequate Nutrition

It is imperative for the figure skater to keep dietary intake balanced and at a caloric intake designed for exercise. This would mean eating from all the food groups each and every day.

Balanced meals provide food for muscles and other body structures. Your physician can provide you with an adequate caloric intake for your weight and age. In addition, fad dieting should be discouraged in the athlete as this can lead to illness or injury.

## 4. Adequate Hydration Daily intake of fluids.

Water is the best source of hydration. Taking a bottle of water to the rink should be encouraged. Your physician

can give guidelines on the proper hydration for your weight and age.

## **5. Yearly Physician Evaluation**

An important factor in any exercise regimen or training program is physician evaluation. A physical with your doctor is advised on a yearly or as-needed basis.

Your doctor can advise on specific needs that you may have to keep your body fit and healthy during times of exercise extremes. In addition, early intervention when problems arise can only be beneficial to your training program.

These tips are only a few of the ways that an athlete can use to prevent injuries during training. Listen to your body and listen to those people around you who are on your “training team.”

An ounce of prevention can go a long way in keeping you healthy and happy on the ice!!

### **About the Author**

Julie Anne Keen is a Certified Nurse Practitioner, Clinical Specialist, & Registered Nurse. She holds degrees as RN, MSN, CS, and AGNP. She practices medicine in hospital and out-patient settings.

She also is a member of the US-FSA Sports Medicine Society. Currently, she is a singles and pairs Sectional Level Competition and Gold Test Judge. Her son was a former national level singles and pairs competitor.