

INSPIRED BY A SUMMER OF SPORT? KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH SPRAINS AND STRAINS

With the excitement of the Euros and other sports fixtures such as Wimbledon and the Olympics coming up, you may have been inspired to take up a new sport or leisure activity. Doctors at Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group are warning people to take a few simple steps to avoid a sprain or strain.

We all know that exercise has many health benefits. It can help you live longer and reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer by up to 50%. But if you haven't exercised in a while you should take things gently to start with. Most sports injuries happen when you do too much too quickly, are not properly prepared or use poor techniques.

So how do you avoid injury and still get the daily exercise you need to lead a healthy lifestyle? Here are a few simple things that can help.

Dr Chris Marshall, a Bedfordshire GP said: "When you start a new sport or exercise for the first time your muscles aren't used to the physical stresses involved which can lead to sprains and strains. So, make sure you start slowly and gradually build up your activity over time.

"It helps to wear footwear that supports and protects your feet and ankles and is appropriate for the type of activity you're doing. Always make sure your footwear is in good condition and avoid running or walking on uneven surfaces if possible.

"Signs of a sprain or strain can include pain, swelling, bruising and tenderness around a joint or in a muscle. You may also find it difficult to move the affected body part."

Most sprains and strains are relatively minor and can be treated at home with self-care techniques, such as paracetamol or PRICE therapy which stands for: Protection; Rest; Ice; Compression; Elevation.

The principles of P.R.I.C.E. should be used for the first 48 – 72 hours. Your local pharmacy can advise on over the counter medicines which are usually cheaper than a prescription from your GP.

If you feel that symptoms are worse and haven't improved after a few days of self-care, visit your local walk-in center or call your GP.

Remember that soft tissue injuries can take up to four weeks to heal so it's important to be patient. Alternatively, call NHS111 - available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They can offer advice about what to do or where to go. All you have to do is dial 111 to talk to the NHS.

HAY FEVER

As summer approaches, the hay fever season can bring difficulties for people with breathing problems such as asthma. There has already been a rise in the number of people seeking medical help for shortness of breath, which can be made worse when there is a high pollen count and warmer weather. Pollen allergies can make hay fever sufferers feel uncomfortable, but for those with asthma or other lung disease it can be more serious and they should keep their prescribed inhaler with them at all times. One in five of us will get hay fever at some point in our lives.

Pharmacists can advise on the use of medication such as eye drops and anti-histamines and are a useful first port of call, especially as they can offer clinical advice without an appointment and review prescribed medication. Anyone who has sudden shortness of breath should call their GP right away or call 111 to talk to the NHS for urgent medical advice.

HEAT WAVE HEALTH ADVICE. LOOK OUT FOR THOSE WHO ARE VULNERABLE IN HOT WEATHER & HELP THEM KEEP COOL & WELL

While most people enjoy sunny weather, very high temperatures are a real health risk for many, especially older people, babies or very young children and anyone with breathing problems or many other health conditions.

As the temperature rises and a mini-heatwave gets underway, our doctors are urging patients to look out for friends and family who are vulnerable in very hot weather, which can make heart and breathing conditions worse and can cause dehydration and heatstroke.

Everyone can take some common-sense measures to help stay well despite soaring temperatures.

Some top tips for staying safe in the heat are:

- look out for anyone who is vulnerable to the effects of the heat, especially older people, young children and babies and those with underlying health conditions
- drink plenty of water – but avoid alcoholic drinks which can make you more dehydrated
- close curtains on rooms that face the sun to keep indoor spaces cooler and remember it may be cooler outdoors than indoors
- open windows when it feels cooler outside and it's safe to do so
- never leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle, especially infants, young children or animals
- try to keep out of the sun from 11am to 3pm
- if you have to go out in the heat, walk in the shade, wear a hat and apply high factor sunscreen. Reapply frequently and check that it is not out of date.
- avoid physical exertion in the hottest parts of the day
- wear light, loose fitting cotton clothes and sunglasses.
- If you suffer from prickly heat apply calamine lotion to the affected areas.

DOCTORS URGE RESIDENTS TO AVOID A&E UNLESS THEIR CONDITION IS SERIOUS OR LIFE THREATENING

Following this week's high temperatures which have seen high numbers attending A&E with minor injuries, health professionals in Bedfordshire are appealing to people to avoid A&E unless their condition is serious or life threatening.

Ensuring people can access the right care at the right time not only saves unnecessary and lengthy waits in hospital, it also means that genuine serious accidents and emergencies can be dealt with quicker.

The different ways that patients can access help and advice are as follows:

High street pharmacists are a useful first port of call, especially as they can offer clinical advice without an appointment.

General practitioners can provide a wide range of health services and support for a range of illnesses or injuries. Nurses and health care assistants often work alongside the GPs to help support patients' everyday health.

GP out of hours services offers all of the services that a GP offers during the day. To contact your GP out of hours service all you need to do is call your practice's daytime number and you will be directed where to go or call.

The NHS Walk-in centre in Luton, 7 days a week 8am to 8pm

NHS 111 can also offer advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week – just dial 111 free of charge from a mobile or landline.

DO YOU WANT TO ACCESS YOUR TEST RESULTS ON LINE

You first have to attend Reception with a photographic Identification and obtain a password.

- Go on line and select Menu
- Then select On Line Services
- Then select Order Repeat Prescription
- Then insert your username and password
- Then select Patient Record
- Finally select Test Results