



## An ASPAAH Guide to Overuse and Chronic Injuries<sup>©</sup>

### What is the difference?

Training and performance load your soft tissues and bones. If they are loaded gradually and given time to recover, they increase their ability to cope with load.

**OVERUSE** injuries occur when the load is too great or increases too rapidly for the tissues to adapt. They often occur after a break from training or performance, when reduced demand may have led to reduced strength and load tolerance. Injured tissues fatigue more easily and move less efficiently, so continued practice or performance increases the risk of developing a more serious injury.

**CHRONIC** injuries develop gradually. They may persist a long time, and intensify or recur frequently. Chronic injuries may be ignored if symptoms are mild and pain is low-grade, but they can be increasingly harmful for your technique, performance and confidence. Injuries that do not receive adequate rest and rehabilitation can become chronic.

### Warning signs

If you have any of the following while practising or performing you could be risking an overuse injury:

- Physical, mental or emotional fatigue
- Tingling
- Weakness
- Reduced co-ordination or clumsiness
- Stiffness or difficulty with normal daily activities

Early advice from your HP, careful attention to loading, and an exercise program may help you avoid an overuse injury. Changing your practice routine may reduce stress on vulnerable areas.

**If you are not sure about your symptoms, ask your Health Professional (HP) for advice. For persisting or severe pain, see a HP as soon as possible.**

### Overuse and chronic injury management

These conditions often benefit from a multifaceted approach. Your HP's advice may include:

- Relative rest: careful load management is essential
- Risk factor analysis: finding factors that caused or maintained the injury enables you to avoid re-injury
- Physical condition: good fitness, strength & general health help optimal performance and recovery
- Technique analysis: ask your teacher whether technical habits may be contributing to tension
- Practice habits: how you use your time, balance between movement and recovery, your focus, your mental and physical response to challenges
- Posture analysis: check with a video or mirror
- Treatment: e.g. manual therapy, electrotherapy, acupuncture. Ergonomic aids may be recommended
- Body awareness: yoga, Feldenkrais®, Alexander Technique, etc. may help coordination and alignment
- Medication: ask your GP or pharmacist before taking anti-inflammatories or analgesics.

### Questions to ask your HP

Would you please explain the injury?

How long do you expect it to take to heal?

How much practice, etc, can I do now?

Can I still do other activities (a hobby, play sport)?

How can I help my own recovery (walking, fitness)?

What should I avoid so I recover quickly?

### Chronic injury and or pain

Pain related to chronic injuries can become chronic. It can be affected by your emotional state and stress, and your brain can keep producing pain even after the injury has healed. Chronic pain can also change the way you move the rest of your body. For help, see the **ASPAAH Guide to Understanding Pain** ([www.aspah.org.au](http://www.aspah.org.au))

**NB: This poster is for educational purposes only and does not replace the advice of a health professional.**