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REHABILITATION OF INJURIES

Weight training can be used to speed recovery of injured muscles, tendons and ligaments. In all cases, you should wait until swelling has gone down and the injured part(s) can be moved through a full range of motion with little or no pain.

Muscle Injuries

Muscles, unlike tendons and ligaments, have a great deal of blood circulation. Thus light or medium to high repetition (10-15), low- weight exercise after swelling has subsided will speed recovery by coursing blood through the injured muscle, rebuilding tissue and flushing out wastes.

Rehab Program for Muscle Injuries

Go through a full range of motion with little or no weight. If you have pain, back off. Try to increase the range of motion each day. If there is little or tolerable pain and swelling has gone down, you are ready to start lifting.

1. Weeks 1-2: Do one to three sets of 15 reps with medium weights. Work toward increasing the weights.
2. After this you want to build muscle strength that was lost during the inactive/active period. Remember! It's not enough to merely rebuild to your former strength level. Your muscles were not strong enough then to prevent the injury. Now you must make those muscles stronger to prevent further injuries.
3. Weeks 3-4: Do three to six sets of 10 (8), 8 (6), 6 (4). Increase the weights to develop strength.
4. After this you can gradually return to your normal program.
5. Note: First you rebuild strength, then muscular endurance.

Tendon and Ligament Injuries

Tendons and ligaments differ from muscle in that they are tough, fibrous, inelastic tissue with very little blood circulation and thus slower to heal. Tendons, the connective link between muscle and bone, produce some of the most common sports injuries. Tendon and ligament injuries usually consist of tears in the fibers and are accompanied by inflammation (i.e., tendinitis). With these injuries, doing many reps usually causes further irritation and should be avoided.

Rehab Program for Tendon or Ligament Injuries

After you can move the injured part through its full range of motion with little or no pain and swelling has gone down:

1. Weeks 1-2: Do one to three sets of 8-10 reps with medium weights. Do not strain. You should finish the set feeling you could have done another two or three reps.
2. There may be some swelling or tenderness. If it subsides before the next workout, continue with the exercises. If it does not, continue with reduced sets and weight once the swelling has gone down.
3. Weeks 3-4: Gradually increase the amount of weight and number of sets. Do three to six sets of 10 (10), 8 (8), 6 (6). Continue these until there is little or no post-exercise swelling or soreness.
4. Weeks 5-6. Strength development stage. Do three to six sets of 10 (10), 8 (8), 6 (4). Increase weights to develop strength and increase effort to where you are working hard to reach the target number of reps for each set.
5. Back to normal: After six weeks of this rehabilitation, gradually return to your normal program.

Pearl, Bill. Getting StrongerBolinas, CA, Shelter Publications, 1986 pg. 386