



Keeping  
British Columbians  
Moving for Life

PHYSIOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION OF BC

# Recreational Injuries

According to Stats Canada, British Columbians are the most physically active Canadians, who love a lifestyle in the great outdoors. But all that active fun can sometimes lead to injuries. Physiotherapists are experts in treating — and preventing — recreational injuries.

Common recreational injuries include ankle and wrist sprains and muscle strains (especially quadriceps and hamstrings). Symptoms include pain, swelling, bruising and being unable to move joints. Tendinopathy — including tennis elbow and Achilles tendon injuries — is a common limitation for sport and recreation enthusiasts.

## How Physiotherapists Help Recreational Injuries

Depending on the injury, techniques to treat sports and recreational injuries can include manual therapy, specialized stretches and exercises, ultrasound, taping, night splints, orthotics, acupuncture and more. For immediate relief from sprains, for example, physiotherapists will treat you with electrotherapy such as ultrasound and laser, and supportive bracing and taping to start your recovery. Physiotherapists develop custom treatments and exercises for your patients that are appropriate for their specific injury.

## Who are Physiotherapists?

Known as Canada's most active health professionals, physiotherapists are university trained medical professionals qualified to assess and treat conditions that are affecting the body's movement system and function.

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## Practical Tips

- **The POLICE Principle (protect, optimal loading, ice, compression, and elevation).** Ice, compression, and elevation are all good first steps following a ligament sprain or other recreational injury, and it is important to protect the injury from further damage, resting as required. Your physiotherapist will assess your strength, range of motion and biomechanics to ensure normal function is regained following an injury by providing treatment and targeted exercises (optimal loading.)
- **Protect joints.** If you have any degenerative changes in your knees (e.g. osteoarthritis), your physiotherapist can show you how to protect your joints during activities of daily living, prescribe exercises to improve the strength of supporting muscles, advise on safe forms of exercise, and even assess footwear.
- **Correct movement patterns.** Poor movement patterns during sports (e.g. incorrect landings during jumping) increase the risk of traumatic hip and knee injuries. Your physiotherapist can show you how to move properly to minimize this risk.

- **Early on, relative rest is key.** In the early stages of treating a strained muscle, you should rest those muscles to ensure the small muscle fibers that have been damaged have time to heal properly. While stretching is not recommended in the early stages, you can use heat or ice for pain management. Your physiotherapist will also use treatments such as manual therapy, electrotherapy, and IMS or acupuncture to reduce healing time.
- **Protection is sometimes necessary.** The challenge of having an injury is that you still need to use the injured area in everyday life and work. This may not allow the injury to heal, and that's when your physiotherapist will use splinting or braces. Hand strains, for instance, can take a long time to heal since it is hard to rest this area of the body. Your physiotherapist can tape or brace a strained area so that you can keep moving while your body heals.



## For more information

To find a physiotherapist best for you, visit the PABC's website at [www.bcphysio.org](http://www.bcphysio.org) or download the **Find a Physio app**.

