

Slide Into Spring Safely

Four Tips for Your

Injury-prevented
Track-Bite-Free

Hydrated

Low-stress

Tendonitis-less

Nutrient-efficient

HAND-SANITIZED

Season

By Sarah Marshall



Even with those hundreds of thousands of erg meters you've logged this winter, slipping back into the water can be a treacherous time for your body, as common—but preventable—injuries can quickly derail a season. We checked in with the USRowing Medical Committee, comprised of doctors—and rowers—for their top piece of advice on how to avoid getting sidelined this spring.

Beat those blisters

Beat those blisters and keep your gear clean.

Unfortunately, all those hours on the erg this winter won't stop you from developing new blisters and calluses as you transition back to sweep or sculling oars.

It's important to take care of calluses and blisters as they develop. Clean fresh blisters thoroughly with soap and water or an alcohol-based cleaner. Use a small needle to puncture the blister from the base or side to allow the fluid to drain. (Remember to clean the needle with alcohol first!) Try not to un-roof the blister after it drains. Apply a compression wrap or bandaid to help preserve the skin and watch out for any signs of infection, such as increased pain, redness at the site of the blister or red streaking into your hand or arm. If you see any of those, seek immediate medical treatment.

It's also important to care for your calluses. If one becomes too thick, you'll develop a blister underneath and may ultimately lose the callus. File calluses gently with an emery board or a piece of fine sandpaper if they become hypertrophic (very thick). Start by removing only a small layer so that you can find the right thickness for you.

Infections are another common spring gotcha. Wipe down stretching mats, ergs, bikes, and cross-training equipment after each use. If you are sharing oars, clean the handles every day, either before or after practice, by wiping them down with an alcohol-containing solution or by soaking in a disinfectant solution.

Finally, avoid track bites by covering that area of the calf with a folded piece of a tube sock or a wristband, like the kind tennis players wear. They're thick and the elasticity will keep them from sliding down the calf. If you do get a track bite, clean it carefully with soap and water and cover with a Band-Aid until it heals.

Stretching mats, ergometers, bikes and cross training equipment should be wiped down after each use to prevent the spread of infection among athletes.



Jo A. Hannafin
M.D., Ph.D.

Certified in orthopedic surgery and sports medicine, Dr. Jo A. Hannafin has been the team physician for USRowing since 1994 and is a member of the FISA Medical Commission. A silver medalist in the lightweight double sculls at the 1984 World Rowing Championships, Hannafin is currently the vice president of the NRF and vice president of the American Orthopedic Society for Sports Medicine.



Kristine A. Karlson
M.D.

A three-time world champion, Karlson placed fifth in the women's quadruple sculls at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona while doing her residency in family medicine at the St. Francis Hospital in Hartford, Connecticut. Karlson would go on to return the favor as the team doctor at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.

Lighten up!

Gripping the oar too tight ain't right.

While the return to the water means saying *sayonara* to the ergs, it unfortunately means it's also a common time for repetitive motion injuries, and one to look out for is forearm tendinitis.

Since erging does not require feathering, the rest of the body may be ready to row when the forearms are not.

In the forearm, near the wrist, there are two tendon groups who cross over each other, creating a place for friction called intersection syndrome. Repeatedly cocking the wrist in the feathering motion can be a significant aggravator to the tendons that have not had to do this all winter.

Adding to the problem is that notoriously choppy water in the spring. It makes many rowers feel they have to hold on tightly to the oar, which transfers more force to the forearm tendons as they bounce over waves.

Intersection syndrome usually presents with forearm pain when cocking the wrist, along with swelling in the forearm just above the wrist. Some who have bad tendinitis have a squeaking sensation that can be felt by gently laying fingers on the area of swelling while the wrist is cocked like feathering an oar. Typically, those who have this cannot comfortably do a number of other daily tasks such as typing.

Intersection syndrome is typically treated with ice, anti-inflammatory medications, and wrist splinting to rest the area so the swelling can come down. Some doctors who feel comfortable with this issue may offer a steroid injection in the area of the pain.

As with most overuse injuries, ignoring the early signs of forearm tendinitis is not a good idea. Refraining from rowing on the water for several days, if able, may be wise. Since time off is not always a practical option for competitive college and high school rowers, my advice is to loosen up. Literally!

Loosen up your gripe even in choppy water, splint early with the first signs of tendinitis and have a good spring season.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36 >>>

USROWING

Getting there is half the battle

Get where you are going without getting sick.

Traveling to a competition can be stressful for athletes at any level. This is especially true when traveling by air, crossing time zones, or competing in a different country.

Two of the most common problems athletes face are the common cold and GI bugs. These infections are picked up while traveling in close contact with the general public. Old-fashioned hand washing is the best defense for such ailments. Additionally, athletes should carry and frequently use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Being away from home means most meals will be eaten on the road. Unfortunately, food and drink can carry illnesses too. To reduce the risk of food-borne illnesses, athletes should stick to bottled drinks, well-cooked food, and fruits with a rind (such as oranges).

Any fruits or vegetables should be well washed before eating or cooking. Another option is to bring food from home since sometimes finding such items on the road are either difficult or impossible.

Remedies for minor illnesses and injuries are not always easy to find when traveling. Therefore, it is smart to bring a travel-sized amount of first aid supplies, analgesics and sunscreen, so it is handy and is a brand you feel comfortable using.

Athletes who cross time zones need to prepare well before departure to be sure they are adjusted to the new time zone by competition day. This involves slowly beginning to adjust activities to reflect the new zone. When traveling east, this means going to bed earlier by one to two hours per day and the opposite if traveling west.

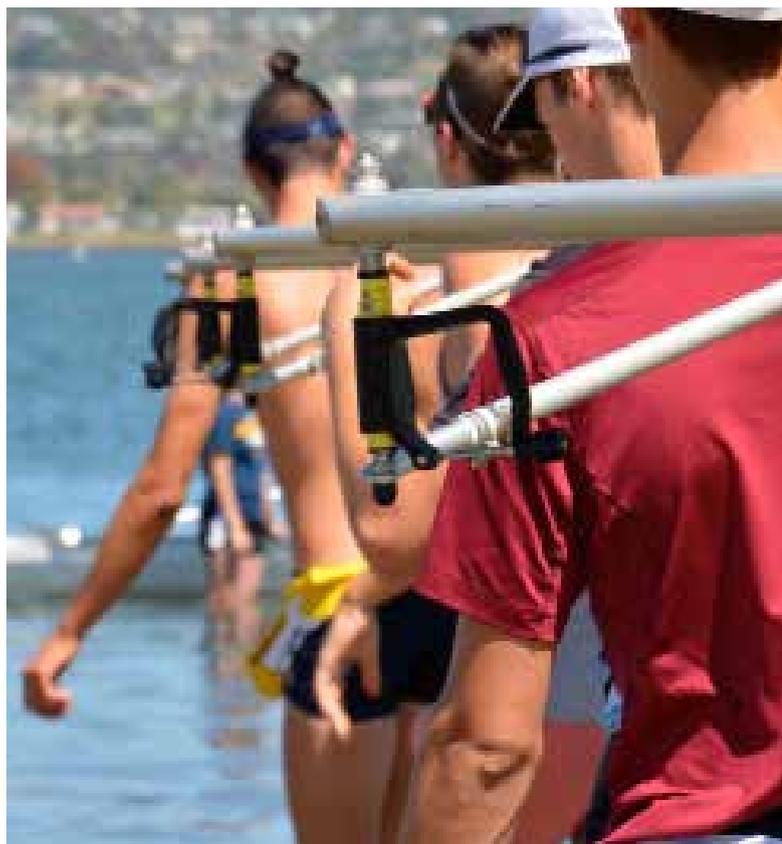
Whether travel plans consist of crossing a time zone or not, traveling by car, bus, plane, or van, time on the road can sometimes cause athletes to forget the basics of self-care. Hydration and movement are two of those basic things. Adequate hydration can be assured by drinking a liter of fluid every few hours. Athletes should frequently get up and move around when safe to do so to reduce the risk of blood clots.

Again, traveling long distances to a competition can be stressful. Athletes want to focus their attention on rowing their best race. With a little bit of planning, education, and prevention, their health is one less thing to worry about!



Matthew Collins M.D.

At the 1993 World Rowing Championships, Dr. Matt Collins was a member of the lightweight four, the only boat that took home a gold medal for the U.S. team. Today, Collins travels with the USRowing team, looking after athletes and paying particular attention to his favorite boat, the lightweight four.





Fuel for the Females

Is it time to re-optimize your intake?

Proper nutrition can help a rower maximize workouts, decrease recovery time, and prevent injury, which ultimately translates to better performance on the water. An energy deficit can lead to fatigue, injury, illness, hormonal imbalances, micro- and macronutrient deficiencies, and other health and performance complications. The combination of decreased energy availability (not enough caloric intake for what an athlete is expending), menstrual irregularity, and poor bone health is an interrelated syndrome known as the Female Athlete Triad.

All female athletes are at risk for this, particularly those in lean sports, where low weight is considered a competitive advantage or there is a weight requirement (e.g. lightweight rowing).

While it's important to get adequate, nutritious caloric intake, optimizing the timing of nutrients by creating a pre- and post-fueling routine can help to eliminate fatigue or GI distress during workouts. Within the hour prior to a workout, consuming a snack that is high in carbohydrates but low in fat and protein will provide the body with an extra boost of glucose typically without causing GI distress (e.g. a banana). Within 45 minutes after completing a workout, it is good to consume a recovery beverage or snack made up of carbohydrate and protein, which helps to decrease recovery time.

Rowers tend to have increased metabolic rates due to their volume of training and their significant lean muscle mass. Therefore, eating consistently throughout the day, approximately every three to five hours, will help ensure adequate energy availability. Aim to consume a diet of balanced macronutrients (proteins, carbohydrates, and fats) at every meal. Consistent balanced eating and proper recovery can decrease "crashes" during workouts, and will minimize excessive evening snacking, which often leads to weight gain.

Calcium and vitamin D, as part of a healthy diet, are helpful to maintain bone health and prevent stress fractures. Adult male and female rowers should aim for 1,000 mg. per day of calcium and 800-1,000 IU per day of vitamin D via food or supplements; younger and older rowers require different amounts. Iron deficiency anemia is also commonly found in endurance athletes, particularly women.

With all the hours spent on the erg, in the boat, in the weight room, cross-training, and focusing on technique to achieve their goals, it's important for athletes to fuel their bodies in a strategic and healthy way, too.

Kathryn E. Ackerman M.D., M.P.H., FACSM

Dr. Ackerman is an internist, fellowship-trained in endocrinology and sports medicine, the medical director of the Female Athlete Program at Boston Children's Hospital, the associate director of the Sports Endocrine Research Lab at Massachusetts General, and a masters rower!

