

Infographic. International Olympic Committee consensus statement on pain management in athletes: non-pharmacological strategies


Brian Hainline,¹ Wayne Derman,^{2,3} Alan Verne,⁴ Richard Budgett,⁵ Masataka Deie,⁶ Jiri Dvorak,^{7,8} Christopher A Harle,⁹ Stanley Herring,¹⁰ Michael McNamee,¹¹ Willem Meeuwisse,¹² G Lorimer Moseley,¹³ Bade Omololu,¹⁴ John Orchard,¹⁵ Andrew Pipe,¹⁶ Babette M Pluim,^{16,17} Johan Raeder,¹⁸ David Siebert,¹⁹ Mike Stewart,²⁰ Mark Campbell Stuart,²¹ Judith Turner,²² Mark Ware,²³ David Zideman,²⁴ Lars Engebretsen²⁵

IOC CONSENSUS STATEMENT ON PAIN MANAGEMENT IN ELITE ATHLETES

NON-PHARMACOLOGICAL STRATEGIES Reference: B. Hainline et al. BJSM 2017

Pain management depends on identifying contributory factors from biological, psychosocial and contextual domains and addressing them through various evidence-based techniques


MODALITIES & MASSAGE



- 1** Physical therapy techniques: no clear benefit for most of them
- 2** Low-level laser therapy: possibly beneficial (tendinopathy & acute muscle recovery)
- 3** Cryotherapy: little evidence from prospective studies
- 4** Ultrasound therapy: unclear benefit
- 5** Electrical stimulation, massage therapy, myofascial trigger point treatments and acupuncture: poor reliability and consistent efficacy for relief of pain resulting from musculoskeletal injury


The effects of modalities may be manifest in an individually specific way, especially as it pertains to the skill of the treating clinician

MOVEMENT, STRENGTH & CONDITIONING




Exercise-based approaches are effective for managing pain in individuals with chronic painful conditions and can also improve patient self-efficacy for managing pain and fear of (re)injury

PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS (with possible efficacy)




- 1** Skills training in goal setting, imagery, relaxation & positive self-statements
- 2** Cognitive restructuring (identifying and challenging negatively biased appraisals) & developing plans for maintaining treatment gains and coping with setbacks and pain flare-ups
- 3** Psychologically informed physical therapy, which incorporates cognitive and behavioural principles and strategies (eg, techniques to reduce fear-avoidance, use of graded activity and exposure techniques), and education about pain during physical rehabilitation, is a promising approach

SUPPLEMENTATION




Persistent pain is influenced by any proinflammatory load, which makes nutrition possibly relevant to managing pain in athletes. However, studies demonstrating benefit from nutritional supplements are not methodologically sound and have unclear relevance to elite athletes

SLEEP




Pain disturbs sleep, and poor sleep quality or duration increases pain levels and decreases pain thresholds. Psychological strategies to address sleep disorders include cognitive-based therapy, self-hypnosis & mindfulness-based stress reduction

SURGERY



Surgery should not be performed to treat chronic pain simply because all other interventions have failed but should rather be used when a structural problem associated with the pain has been identified



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Pain and injury are not synonymous. Pain can occur without sport injury, and sport injury may not necessarily manifest with pain. It is important to understand the basis of pain in elite athletes and then to begin non-pharmacological treatment based on the underlying aetiology. Pharmacological strategies can complement non-pharmacological management but should not be used as stand-alone treatment. Multidisciplinary pain management offers the best chance of addressing any combination of biomechanical maladaptations, aberrant neurophysiology and psychosocial influencers of pain.

- ¹National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), Indianapolis, Indiana, USA
- ²UCT/MRC Research Unit for Exercise Science and Sports Medicine, Department of Human Biology, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa
- ³International Olympic Committee Research Centre, Cape Town, South Africa
- ⁴WADA, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
- ⁵International Olympic Committee, Lausanne, Switzerland
- ⁶Orthopedic Surgery, Aichi Ika Daigaku, Aichi-gun, , Japan
- ⁷Swiss Concussion Center, Zurich, Switzerland
- ⁸Spine Unit, Schulthess Clinic, Zurich, Switzerland
- ⁹Health Policy and Management, Indiana University, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA
- ¹⁰Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, USA
- ¹¹College of Engineering, Swansea University, Swansea, UK
- ¹²Sport Injury Prevention Research Centre, Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada
- ¹³University of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia
- ¹⁴Orthopaedic Surgery, University of Ibadan College of Medicine, Ibadan, , Nigeria
- ¹⁵School of Public Health, University of Sydney, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
- ¹⁶Sports Medicine, Royal Netherlands Lawn Tennis Association, Amersfoort, The Netherlands
- ¹⁷Home, Ede, The Netherlands
- ¹⁸Anesthesiology, Oslo University, Oslo, Norway
- ¹⁹Family Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, USA
- ²⁰Physical Therapy, East Kent Hospitals University, Canterbury, UK
- ²¹BMJ Learning, BMJ Group, London, UK
- ²²Psychology, University of Washington School of Medicine, Seattle, Washington, USA

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²³Pain Management, McGill University Health Centre, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

²⁴International Olympic Committee Medical and Scientific Games Group, Lausanne, Switzerland

²⁵Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Oslo University Hospital, Oslo, Norway

Correspondence to Dr Brian Hainline, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), Indianapolis, Indiana, USA; bhainline@ncaa.org

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