
Aerobics - preventing injury

Summary

- Aerobics and fitness classes involve the movement of large muscle groups in continuous rhythmic activity to music.
 - Aerobics is associated with a significant number of sports injuries. Injuries are generally traumatic injuries and overuse injuries.
 - Using the right techniques and equipment can help prevent injury.
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Aerobics and fitness classes involve the movement of large muscle groups in continuous rhythmic activity to music. There are more than a dozen aerobic dance hybrids, many of which are extensions or combinations of high and low impact.

Common aerobics injuries

Aerobics is associated with a significant number of sports injuries. Injuries generally fall into two groups:

- **Traumatic injuries** – these occur as a result of a fall, twist or similar accident and most often involve the ankle or knee.
- **Overuse injuries** – these usually develop gradually, often as a result of a change in the amount or intensity of aerobics, or due to a training error. Shin pain is the most common overuse injury, while foot and knee overuse injuries are also common.

Back injuries may also be caused, or aggravated by, aerobic exercise.

Preventing aerobics injuries

To prevent injury you should:

- be prepared
- use good technique and practices
- wear the right gear
- check the environment
- know yourself and the sport.

Prepare for aerobics

Remember to:

- Warm up, stretch and cool down.
- Consult your doctor for a heart and lung assessment before starting an aerobics program if you are aged over 40.
- Have a musculoskeletal assessment performed by a sports medicine professional before commencing aerobics if you have suffered an injury in the past.
- Start your class at a moderate pace, to allow you to warm up adequately.

Use good technique and practices during aerobics

Good technique and practices can help prevent injuries. Suggestions include:

- Use the good technique emphasised by your instructors.
- Start all aerobics sessions with a gentle warm-up and stretching.
- All beginners' classes should have a second instructor available to move among the group and correct any faults. This is also important when learning new techniques.
- Seek advice from your instructor about how to improve or correct your technique if you have injuries that may be related to poor technique.

Wear the right gear

Make sure you:

- Wear footwear specifically designed for aerobics. Good fit, stability, secure lacing and good forefoot cushioning are important features of an aerobics shoe.
- Choose clothing that fits well and has good moisture transfer properties.
- Consider a sports bra to improve comfort. Individual fit is very important.

Check the environment

Choosing an appropriate venue is important. It's a good idea to:

- Choose a class run by instructors who are registered with Kinect Australia or Fitness Australia.
- Make sure aerobics areas are well lit.
- Check that the temperature in the aerobics area is maintained at a moderate level, with good ventilation.
- Use facilities with a floor suited to aerobics. Sprung wooden floors or padded carpet over concrete are best.
- Check that all implements and equipment used in classes are maintained in good condition.
- Make sure cool, fresh water is readily available.
- Check that the music is clear and at a comfortable volume.

Know yourself and aerobics techniques

Suggestions include:

- Choose activities that are suited to your fitness level.
- Know and use the right techniques.
- Know how to use the equipment properly and safely.

Respond promptly to aerobics injuries

If you or someone else is injured:

- Seek prompt attention from qualified first aid personnel. First aid facilities should be available at all fitness centres.
- Get prompt attention for all traumatic injuries.
- Have injuries that do not respond quickly to first aid measures assessed by a sports medicine professional, preferably a doctor, to ensure an accurate diagnosis and treatment.
- Don't wait until pain is severe. Overuse injuries, especially to the shin, are common in aerobics. They often cause only mild discomfort at first, but frequently get worse. They can be caused by many factors and an early full assessment is important for recovery.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Always call triple zero for an ambulance in an emergency Tel. 000

- Sports physician
- Physiotherapist
- Australian Physiotherapy Association Tel. (03) 9092 0888
- Smartplay Tel. (03) 9674 8777
- Exercise physiologist

Things to remember

- Aerobics and fitness classes involve the movement of large muscle groups in continuous rhythmic activity to music.
- Aerobics is associated with a significant number of sports injuries. Injuries are generally traumatic injuries and overuse injuries.
- Using the right techniques and equipment can help prevent injury.

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