

Blisters

Among the most common sporting injuries are blisters. A blister is a fluid-filled lesion most commonly due to friction, pressure, excess moisture or burns. Blisters are usually very painful. Most people will, at one time or another, experience a blister; the most common area of blister formation is the feet.

Blisters on the feet can sometimes be attributed to foot deformities, and in the diabetic individual should be treated with extreme caution and medical attention should always be sought. Most often, foot blisters can be due to poorly fitting shoes that do not allow enough room for the feet, wearing socks that trap moisture and do not allow heat and fluid to escape, or foreign bodies within the sock or shoe. If you are an individual who has feet that commonly sweat, it is worth considering socks that have 'wicking' properties or to consider wearing two pairs of socks. Wearing two pairs of socks will allow the foot to move within the sock and shoe without fear of rubbing or friction. Always check inside your shoe for debris and be cautious when lacing the shoe. Proper foot hygiene also contributes to the prevention of blisters.

Beyond the feet, blisters can also occur in areas where the skin may rub against itself or a piece of clothing. This commonly happens in the under arm area, along the chest (for men) and occasionally between the upper thighs. If you are participating in endurance activities, or in activities where you are likely to sweat, it is worth considering wearing clothes that have moisture wicking properties or are specialized for increased ventilation in extreme heat. Lubricants can also be used in areas of high friction. This can be as simple as applying Vaseline, or you can use more specialized products that are available at most sporting good stores.

Prior to a blister forming, one will usually feel a 'hot spot' - an area of increased heat and often itching. If this is suspected, act quickly, removing footwear or if possible clothing that is causing the irritation. Many products are available for purchase that provide padding or cushioning to protect such an area in the early stages of blister formation. An example of such a product is moleskin. The 'moleskin' material would be cut to form a doughnut that would surround, but not compress, the blister.

The general rule is, when possible, to keep the blister intact. If you have diabetes or poor circulation, do not try to address the blister on your own - seek medical attention from a doctor or a specialized foot care professional. If the blister is open, wash your hands and the blister with warm soapy water and cover it with an anti-septic ointment and bandage to speed the healing process. Cut away all the dead skin after several days using tweezers and scissors. Ensure tools are cleaned and sterilized with rubbing alcohol before use. If any signs of infection such as pus, redness, warmth or increasing pain occur, further medical attention should be sought.

Blisters are usually preventable, however when they do occur, with proper attention and treatment, they can quickly heal. If ever in doubt about the degree of the blister, it is always advisable to seek further medical attention.