# Shoulder & Body Care

ALTHOUGH YOU ARE NOT GETTING ROUGHED UP ON THE FOOTBALL FIELD, WATER POLO PLAYERS SEE THEIR SHARE OF INJURIES. SELDOM A WEEK GOES BY WHERE ONE OF YOUR TEAMMATES IS NOT SITTING OUT DUE TO SOME INURY OR HEALTH ISSUES. AS YOU GEAR UP FOR FOUR YEAS OF BEING IN THE POOL ON AN ALMOST DAILY BASIS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND SOME KEYS HABITS TO CARE FOR YOUR HEALTH. BELOW ARE SOME BASIC FIRST YEAR TIPS.

## Ear Care (Swimmer's Ear)

Water normally flows into and out of your ears without causing any problems. You can nearly always shower, swim, and walk in the rain without a problem — which is remarkable, considering how large and deep an opening your ear provides. You're protected by your ear's shape, which tips fluid out, and by its lining, which has acidic properties that protect against bacteria and fungi.

When your ear is exposed to excess moisture, however, water can remain trapped in your ear canal. The skin inside becomes soggy, diluting the acidity that normally prevents infection. A cut in the lining of the ear canal also can allow bacteria to penetrate your skin. When this happens, bacteria and fungi from contaminated water or from objects placed in your ear can grow and cause a condition called Swimmer's Ear (acute otitis externa)...an infection of your outer ear and ear canal.

**Signs/Symptoms**

- Severe pain when moving your outer ear or pushing on the little "bump" in front of your ear.
- Itching of your outer ear.
- Feeling of fullness or stuffiness in your ear.
- Pus draining from your ear.
- Decreased or muffled hearing.

**Prevention**

***Keep your ears dry.*** Dry your ears thoroughly after exposure to moisture from practice. Dry your outer ear slowly & gently with a soft towel or cloth.

***Avoid putting objects in the ear*** (e.g. fingers, cotton swabs) that may scratch the ear canal and provide a site for infection. However, excessive earwax can also trap water in.

***Use an over-the-counter solution*** called "Swim Ear" or a similar product to drain your ear after each practice. You can make your own homemade solution mixing equal parts rubbing alcohol and white vinegar.

***Try earplugs***. Some earplugs are designed specifically to keep water out of your ears when swimming.



## Skin Care

The warm golden cast of the sun is very alluring. And many athletes can't resist spending hours beneath its glow.

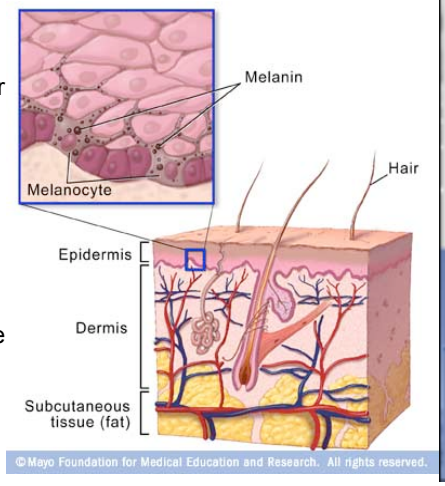
But not all of the sun's rays are pleasing. Ultraviolet (UV) light, the invisible but intense rays of the sun, damages your skin. Repeated sun exposure and suntans cause premature aging of the skin (wrinkling, sagging, and brown sunspots). Repeated sunburns increase the risk of skin cancer in the damaged area. Due to the dangerous affects of the sun, all water polo players ***must*** develop habits protecting them from the sun.

### How it works?

A ***suntan*** is the result of injury to the epidermis, the top layer of your skin. A tan develops when UV light accelerates the production of melanin. Melanin is the dark pigment in the epidermis that gives your skin its normal color. The extra melanin — produced to protect the deeper layers of your skin — creates the darker color of a "tan." A suntan is your body's way of blocking out the ultraviolet rays to prevent further injury to the skin, but the protection only goes so far.

Eventually, ultraviolet light causes the skin to burn, bringing pain, redness and swelling. Depending on the severity of the burn, the dead, damaged skin may peel away to make room for new skin cells. Though the symptoms of ***sunburn*** may fade after several days, the damage to your skin remains. Sun exposure that is intense enough to cause a burn can also damage the DNA of skin cells. This damage sometimes leads to skin cancer.

Even though people with darker skin can tolerate longer periods of sun exposure without burning, due to the protective action of the melanocytes, the sun can still cause skin damage.



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# Shoulder & Body Care cont....

## How to prevent sunburns?

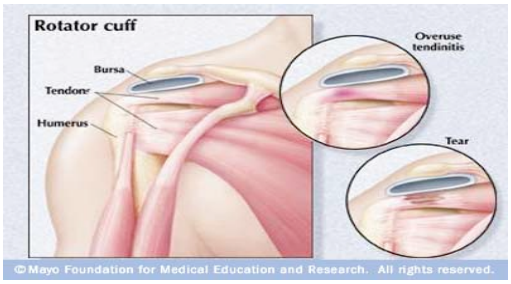
- **Tanning**. Because of the 2- to 4-hour delay before the symptoms of sunburn appear, don't expect symptoms (such as redness) to tell you when it's time to get out of the sun.
- **Time of day.** Avoid exposure to the sun during the hours of 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM, when the sun's rays are most intense. Don't let overcast days give you a false sense of security. Over 70% of the sun's rays still get through the clouds. Over 30% of the sun's rays can also penetrate loosely woven fabrics (for example, a T-shirt).
- **High altitude**. Be especially careful about exposure to the sun at high altitudes. Sun exposure increases 4% for each 1000 feet of elevation above sea level. A sunburn can occur quickly when you are hiking above timberline. Remember also that water, sand, or snow increases sun exposure. The shade from a hat or umbrella won't protect you from reflected rays.
- **High-risk.** About 15% of white teenagers have skin that never tans but only burns. These fair-skinned people need to be extremely careful about sun exposure throughout their lives. If you have red or blond hair, blue or green eyes, freckles, or excessive moles you are at increased risk for sunburn and skin cancer.
- **Eyes, Nose, Lips.** Apply a lip coating that contains PABA. If your nose or some other area has been repeatedly burned during the summer, protect it completely from all the sun's rays with zinc oxide ointment. Protect your eyes from the sun's rays. Years of exposure to ultraviolet light increases the risk of cataracts. Buy sunglasses with UV protection.

## What type of sunscreen should I use?

- The sun protection factor (SPF) or filtering power of a sunscreen product determines what percentage of the ultraviolet rays get through to the skin. An SPF of 15 allows only 1/15 (7%) of the sun's rays to get through and thereby extends safe sun exposure from 20 minutes to 5 hours without sunburning. An SPF higher than 15 protects against sunburn for more than 5 hours. (SPF 34 = 97% absorbed)
- Athletes with acne-prone skin should use a sunscreen labeled “non-comedogenic” (does not clog pores) and apply it after applying topical acne medication.
- Fair-skinned people (with red or blond hair) need a sunscreen with an SPF of 20 to 30. Regardless, sunscreens should be used daily if you are going to be in the sun for more than 20 minutes.
- Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before exposure to the sun to give it time to penetrate the skin. “Waterproof “ sunscreen begins losing effectiveness after 80 mins in the water, so reapply before this time, especially if you have towel-dried for maximum protection. “Water Resistant” is only for 40 min protection in H20.

## Shoulder Care

Shoulder pain is the most common musculo-skeletal complaint in water polo players. Your rotator cuff is made up of the muscles and tendons. Four major muscles (subscapularis, supraspinatus, infraspinatus and teres minor) and their tendons connect your upper arm bone (humerus) with your shoulder blade.




### Signs/Symptoms

- Pain and tenderness in your shoulder, especially when reaching overhead, reaching behind your back, lifting or pulling.
- Shoulder weakness.
- Loss of shoulder range of motion.

### Prevention & Care

**Rest.** Stop doing what caused the pain and try to avoid painful movements. If able, limit heavy lifting or overhead activity for 3 to 6 days until your shoulder starts to feel better.

**Ice and heat**. Putting ice on your shoulder helps reduce inflammation and pain. Use a cold pack, a bag of frozen vegetables or a towel filled with ice cubes for 15 to 20 minutes at a time. Do this every couple of hrs the 1st day or two. After about 2 or 3 days, when the pain and inflammation have improved, hot pads may help relax tightened and sore muscles. Limit heat applications to 20 minutes. Anti-inflammatory mediations may help reduce initial swelling also. Seek parents permission first.

**Keep your muscles limber.** Once your injury heals and you have good range of motion in your shoulder, continue exercising. Daily shoulder stretches and a balanced shoulder-strengthening program can help prevent a recurrence of your injury.

**Strengthen your shoulder** and help prevent recurrence of an injury thru regular gentle stretching exercises. Daily stretch bands or elastic tubing exercises and for stabilization exercises for the rotator cuff are key and should be done before every water polo practice.

