

## **Exercise and the Skin Fact Sheet**

Regular exercise does not necessarily improve skin health and may lead to skin conditions that require treatment, yet experts agree that exercise is one of the most beneficial activities a person can do to improve one's overall health

### **Blisters**

- Blisters form when friction between an area of the body and athletic equipment causes a splitting of the top layer of the skin, allowing fluid build-up
- Blisters are common with runners and those who regularly lift weights
- To prevent blisters, reduce friction by creating more distance from the equipment to the skin:
  - Wear moisture-wicking socks
  - Apply a thin layer of petroleum jelly between the sock and the shoe
  - Use gloves to lift weights
- Do not peel off the top layer of a blister
- If a blister comes off, keep it covered with petroleum jelly and a bandage
- See a dermatologist if redness appears on the skin in the vicinity of the blister since that could indicate an infection

### **Fungus/Athlete's Foot**

- Athlete's foot is the most common fungal infection in exercise enthusiasts
- Athlete's foot grows best in dark, moist and warm environments such as running shoes
- Symptoms of athlete's foot include:
  - An itching and burning sensation on the feet
  - Peeling, cracking and scaling of the skin between the toes
  - Redness, scaling, or dryness on the soles and along the sides of the feet
- Some patients with athlete's foot may be at risk for toenail fungus
- To prevent athlete's foot, never go barefoot in a locker room. Wear shoes, socks, sandals or aquatic shoes at all times
- Most cases of athlete's foot respond well to over-the-counter medications
- Persistent or recurring infections will require prescription-strength medications from a dermatologist

### **Acne Mechanica**

- Acne mechanica can occur under athletic equipment or tight-fitting clothing
- It develops in warm, moist environments, especially areas prone to friction
- To prevent acne mechanica, eliminate tight-fitting clothing and wear more breathable, moisture-wicking fabrics
- If acne mechanica continues, see a dermatologist for prescription medications

### **Turf Burns**

- Turf burns (or road rash) are abrasions that can occur on an area of the body, usually the arms or legs, if athletic padding is not used
- Most cases of indoor turf burns are caused by sliding on the basketball court or from constant contact with exercise mats or carpet
- Clean turf burns and cover them with petroleum jelly and a bandage
- See a dermatologist if there are signs of infection or if turf burn doesn't seem to be healing properly

### **Sun-Safety Tips for Outdoor Fitness Buffs**

- If possible, seek shade between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when UV rays are the strongest
- Wear sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 15 that provides broad-spectrum protection from both ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays. Re-apply every two hours, even on cloudy days, and after swimming or sweating.
- Keep sunscreen in your pockets as a reminder to reapply
- Wear dark-colored clothing which has built-in SPF
- Always wear a hat, preferably a wide-brimmed one
- Always wear a shirt
- Skiers should take extra precautions since snow is 80 percent reflective, even in shaded areas
- Avoid tanning beds. Ultraviolet light from the sun and tanning beds can cause skin cancer and wrinkling. If you want to look like you've been in the sun, consider using a sunless self-tanning product, but continue to use sunscreen with it.

**For more information about exercise and the skin, visit the American Academy of Dermatology's Web site at [www.aad.org](http://www.aad.org).**