



BLISTERS

Blisters occur when friction causes layers of skin to separate and accumulate fluid. Fluid may be clear (serous) or dark (blood) depending upon the depth of the blister. Deep blisters tend to be filled with bloody fluid because they are closer to blood vessels.

Soft skin, whether from non-use or sweat, is more prone to blisters than tough skin. Blisters are usually more of a problem early in the season when the athletes are unaccustomed to heavy work. Most blisters are on the hands and feet but can form anywhere clothing or equipment rubs. Obviously, prevention is the key.

The following may help minimize the chance of blisters

1. Increase work load gradually. It is helpful to use required equipment with a proper fit during pre-season training.
2. Break in new shoes gradually and allow them to dry between training sessions.
3. Wear the correct size shoe. Don't assume that you can wear the same shoe that you wore last season. Shoe designs change and the same brand and model could have a different fit.
4. Wear the proper shoe. For example, running shoes should not be worn for court sports. An improper shoe will not only rub, but it can also increase the chance of other injuries.
5. Wear clean, dry socks. Two thin pairs are better than one thick one. The socks then rub on each other rather than your foot. Acrylic blend socks may also help prevent blisters better than other materials.
6. Keep your feet dry and powder your feet to decrease friction between your foot and the sock.
7. Cover any known problem spots before a blister develops with tape, moleskin, lube, or other protective material.

If you get a blister, proper treatment will keep the blister from becoming infected and permit you to quickly return to activity without discomfort.

IF THE BLISTER HAS NOT BROKEN

1. Clean the area with surgical soap and apply pressure on the blister with a bandage or non-stick dressing. This helps the body re-absorb the fluid in the blister.
2. Use a donut pad to take pressure off the blister. Try to keep the skin over the blister intact.
3. If the blister is large, it may need to be drained. Clean the skin with surgical soap, and use a sterile needle or scalpel to make a small hole for the fluid to drain out.

DO NOT DRAIN THE BLISTER OF ANOTHER PERSON WITHOUT WEARING OSHA APPROVED LATEX GLOVES! SINCE YOU WILL BE IN CONTACT WITH BROKEN SKIN AND BODY FLUIDS, YOU COULD BE EXPOSED TO INFECTIOUS DISEASES SUCH AS HEPATITIS B OR HIV.

4. Clean the area again with surgical soap.
5. Use a donut pad with antibiotic ointment (Neosporin®, Bacitracin®, Polysporin®) and a dressing to protect the area.
6. Monitor the blister daily for any signs of infection: redness, increased tenderness, increased pain, and increased temperature. If there are any signs of infection, contact an athletic trainer or physician immediately.

IF THE BLISTER HAS BROKEN

1. Clean the area with surgical soap. **If you are helping another person, wear OSHA approved latex gloves, since you will be in contact with broken skin and body fluids.**
2. Use a donut pad with antibiotic ointment (Neosporin®, Bacitracin®, Polysporin®) and a dressing to protect the area.
3. Monitor the blister daily for any signs of infection: redness, increased tenderness, increased pain, and increased temperature. If there are any signs of infection, contact an athletic trainer or physician immediately.

The preceding information was gathered from: American Red Cross, Community First Aid & Safety, Mosby Lifeline, 1993 and ©1992 United States Olympic Committee, Sports Medicine Division (revised 18 October 1999).