

Conversation To Have

This is a difficult time for your child, and providing support is an important step to take immediately.

- Arrange physio appointments to discuss recovery and rehabilitation steps
- Talk about how their weekly routine will change
- Try and establish a new routine with new hobbies and goals
- Focus on positives such as more time for new activities and seeing friends and family
- Explain how it will be hard but there is support from yourself or non-family members if needed.

Information For Yourself

- Speak to coaches who have had other athletes experience stress fracture injuries
- Speak to other parents who have been through similar times like this
- Here are some resources to look at
 - Looking after your emotional well-being following a physical injury (NHS University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire)
 - Not just a physical thing: The psychology of sports injuries and recovery (Boston's Children's Hospital)

Mental Health Awareness

Physical recovery and healing are always the number one priority in stress fracture athletes, mental health needs to be highlighted as just as an important factor to take care of.

This mental stress can then prolong the healing of the stress fracture due to the body constantly in a high-stress state.

"70% of athletes with stress fractures suffer from psychological stress"

Coping Strategies

Not everyone will benefit from one strategy, so try several different ones and see which suits your child the best.

- Form a new routine
- Positive self-talk
- Arrange counselling or a sports psychologist appointment
- Make future goals to work towards
- Speak to other athletes/parents who have experienced similar
- Try some emotional interventions such as cognitive restructuring and emotional calming

This is a difficult time for both you and your child. It is okay to feel stressed and worried but with advice, it will give you a good starting point to tackle the issue. There is always someone to talk to or to go for help, so don't be worried about asking for help.



Stress Fractures In Young Runners

A Guide For The Parents/Guardian

Alyth Gollan

What Is A Stress Fracture?

A stress fracture is a microcrack that occurs due to excessive load to the bone, usually long-distance runners or athletes who train a lot on hard surfaces. They can also occur if training is increased too rapidly for the athlete.

Stress fractures in runners usually appear in the lower limbs due to all the impact going through the legs first.

“3.9 to 19% of adolescent athletes sustain a stress fracture”

Warning Signs!

- Pain in one specific area
- Pain when exercising and no pain when resting
- Painful to touch/push into possible stress fracture sight
- Intense pain caused when athlete jumps on single sore leg

If your child is experiencing all the above symptoms, they should stop training/competing immediately.

If you have not seen a doctor, go as soon as possible as the process of getting a diagnoses can sometimes be very lengthy.

This is going to be a big transition for you and your child but with some guidance it will make it easier.

Negative Impacts

Psychological

With **not being able** to train and compete, **athletic identity** will be lost. With this major change to their life and pressure from themselves it can therefore trigger depression, severe anxiety, frustration, and lack of purpose you're your child.

Socialising

Your child may withdraw from talking and begin to feel lonely as they are no longer involved in training. They may feel like they are going to lose connections with their teammates and coaches, who are vital friends in their life.

Fear Of Returning To Running

Many athletes experience a positive attitude towards rehabilitation as there is so much support around them in every session. When it comes to finally being signed off to return to running, this can be extremely daunting for them. Anxiety to return is natural to feel but some athletes might **completely refuse and become too anxious to ever return to running.** This can be due to the **fear of re-injury or not being at fit as they were before the injury.**

Positive Impact

This situation is going to be hard for both your child and yourself but there are some positives that will be seen.

- Time to work on non-sports related goals (school, job, hobbies)
- Can focus on building up strength in muscle group that may have been neglected (if doctor passes this first)
- Gives a physical break away from their sport but also a mental break

These positive points may be hard for them to see at first, but you are their closest support so keep reminding them that it will get easier.



Transition

Transitioning out of running can be a difficult time for any athlete, but when you are at a younger age this situation might be confusing and upsetting. Injury can never be predicted so therefore it is a non-normative transition, meaning the athlete is never prepared and it is not a planned break from their sport.