Athlete’s Guide to the role of Sports Physiotherapy
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Introduction

Sport and performance: A challenge for the Athlete’s health.

Every Olympian’s goal is:
Citius, Altius, Fortius
Faster, Higher, Stronger

In his/her quest for sporting excellent, high performance athletes put great strain on their bodies on a daily basis. Peak performance depends on peak physical condition, negative effects of injury can have serious consequences especially when injury interferes with training and competition.

NB: This document does not replace the need to take medical or physiotherapy advice. Athletes with medical or injury concerns are advised to seek the advice of a medical doctor and/or physiotherapist.

The Role of Sports Physiotherapy

The aim of this booklet is to raise the awareness of athletes and their entourage about the importance of sports physiotherapy and physical therapies not only at the time of competition but also through all stages of the athlete’s sporting career.
The IOC Medical and Scientific Commission Protecting Athletes’ Health

Since 1967 the IOC Medical Commission has been working to promote athletes’ health and safety during training and competition. Its philosophy is based on three fundamental principles:

• Protection of the health of athletes.
• Respect for both medical and sport ethics.
• Equality for all competing athletes.

In accordance with the IOC’s medical code (www.olympic.org) the IOC Medical and Scientific Commission aims to ensure that all reasonable measures are implemented with respect to injury prevention and optimal sports injury treatment in accordance with current evidenced based physiotherapy, medical and scientific knowledge.

IOC Research on Sports Injury Prevention

The IOC Medical Commission is a strong advocate of injury prevention through ongoing research, consensus statements and conferences. Nine IOC research centres have been appointed globally to advance scientific research on prevention of injury and illness in sport.

The Importance of Physiotherapy within the IOC

The IOC Medical Commission recognises the high level of training and education of sports physiotherapists and supports their involvement as an integral member of the multidisciplinary medical team and recognises physiotherapy as the lead discipline of all physical therapies disciplines. In addition, the IOC includes the appointment of a physiotherapist on their “Games Group” to ensure the provision of physiotherapy services during Olympic Competition are of the highest standard and are in keeping with current evidence based scientific research.
Sports Physical Therapies – A Multidisciplinary Approach an Overview and Definition

Sports physiotherapists are professionals who treat injuries which occur through sports and exercise as their specialised field which requires expert knowledge obtained through a combination of formal study and clinical experience.

A Multidisciplinary Approach

In the context of the Olympic movement the term ‘Physical Therapies’ is used to describe professionals who use ‘physical techniques’ as their method of treatment intervention and for the prevention, management and rehabilitation of injury. During the Olympic Games the organising committee of the host nation is required to provide physical therapies services for all athletes. The composition of the physical therapies team depends on legal, ethical requirements and policies of recognised medical practice of the host nation.

This team is led by physiotherapy and usually incorporates a number of other physical therapy disciplines such as sports massage, osteopathy, chiropractors, acupuncturists etc.
The Advancing Role of Sports Physical Therapies

Traditionally the major focus of physiotherapy was on treatment and rehabilitation but now in more recent years the major focus has turned to ‘preventative physiotherapy’ reflecting the importance of avoiding loss of time from training and competition due to injury.

To provide Athletes with the highest quality, comprehensive and accessible Physiotherapy and Physical Therapies Services aimed at:

- Injury Prevention
- Support Performance
- Management & Treatment
- Rehabilitation
- Recovery

Supporting the Emotional and Physical Demands of Sport

Today the sports physical therapies work with athletes as an integral link between the multidisciplinary medical team and the athlete. This team approach ensures that in addition to the physical aspects the psychological aspects of athlete’s response to injury are managed effectively.
The Role of Physiotherapy in Injury Prevention

The sports physiotherapist is an active promoter of physical activity and also has a professional obligation to ensure that sports participation is as safe as possible. Sports physiotherapy research has focused injury prevention strategies to help athletes reduce the risk of injury.

Prevention is Better than Cure!
With a focus on injury prevention the IOC Medical and Scientific Commission together with a team of experts published a consensus statement on the importance of routine periodic health checks for the athlete. These health checks should also include a full musculoskeletal physiotherapy assessment (i.e. assessment of joints, ligaments, muscle strength, balance, alignment, neuromuscular coordination, biomechanics etc.) with a view to identifying potential areas which may give rise to injury.

Injury Prevention – Preparation for Exercise and Physical Exertion
Athletes, coaches and trainers should ensure that training regimes include activities which can enhance safety and performance. Preparation for sport often involves a variety of activities including a proper warm-up routine and followed by cool down and recovery strategies. The IOC in association with the Oslo Sports Trauma Research Center have recently developed an Injury prevention app called ‘GET-SET – TRAIN SMARTER’. http://www.ostrc.no/en/News-archive/News-2014/Get-Set---New-free-app-for-injury-prevention-training/

Get Set has two inputs, where the user can choose to find exercises for a sport or a body part.

Under “Sport”, you can pick among Olympic summer and winter sports, and as another option you can find injury prevention exercises targeting specific body parts. In other words, for each of the sports, the exercise programme is tailored to the injury risk profile of the sport. Likewise, under “Body”, the user will find exercises developed to prevent shoulder, back, groin, hamstring, knee, or ankle injuries.

This app is aimed to help athletes to train smarter by providing evidence-based injury prevention exercises illustrated on video in seven different languages (English, French, Spanish, Russian, German, Chinese, and Norwegian). The app can be easily accessed on smartphone (Android, iOS) and is free of charge. Once the exercise videos are downloaded to the mobile phone, they are stored on the device, allowing the users to benefit from Get Set wherever they are.
Adequate Warm-up
The most effective type of warm-up consists of both a general and a specific warm-up focused on the requirements of the sport. It is generally acknowledged that a structured warm up can help reduce the risk of injury. The intensity and duration of the warm-up is usually determined by the coach and the athlete, the general guideline is to produce some mid sweating without fatigue.

Does Stretching Prevent against Injury?
While numerous studies have been carried out the effect of increased flexibility on reducing incidence of injury or enhancing performance remains largely unproven. However, stretching techniques are commonly carried out by many athletes as part of their pre and post training routine. Recent research has raised the hypothesis that stretching may have a more important role in explosive sports that have a high demand on the stretch – shortening cycle such as football or basketball. Flexibility exercises used in sport-specific warm-ups should closely mirror the required movements and mechanics of the sport rather than using a general protocol.

Principles of Stretching
Stretching is important in that it assists in increasing muscle, soft tissue and joint flexibility.
The basic principles of stretching are:
• Warm-up prior to stretching.
• Stretch before and after exercise.
• Move into a stretch gradually.
• Stretch to a point of tension but not pain.

Stretching techniques commonly used by athletes.
Athletes commonly perform four different types of stretching exercises
• Static
• Dynamic
• Ballistic
• Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation (PNF).
The amount and type of stretching should be decided by the physiotherapist, coach and athlete. In some cases, it is preferable to limit stretching (e.g. a hyper-mobile athlete) and in some sports intensive stretching regimes may be counterproductive. Over-stretching or stretching to a point where pain is felt may be inappropriate and detrimental. It appears that the intensity of stretching is relatively under-researched, and the importance of body position and its influence on stretch intensity, is largely unknown.

Static Stretching
Static stretching is a type of stretch whereby a person stretches the muscle until a gentle tension is felt and held without any movement or bouncing. The position should be reached slowly and gently and held for 30–60 seconds. The athlete should not experience any pain or discomfort in the muscle being stretched. Static stretch is considered the safest method of increasing flexibility however athletes should be aware that some studies show that static stretches can have a negative effect on explosive movements and strength output for up to one hour following static stretching.

Dynamic Stretching
Involves movement while stretching a muscle or muscle group, without the bouncing associated with ballistic stretching. In contrast to static stretching, dynamic stretching is not associated with strength or performance deficits.
Ballistic Stretching

With Ballistic stretching the muscle is stretched near to its limit and then stretched further with a bouncing movement. The disadvantage of this stretch is that a quick bouncing movement can cause a strong reflex muscle contraction, for these reasons ballistic stretching is not suitable for all athletes. Athletes who choose to use ballistic stretching are strongly recommended to learn correct and safe techniques under the guidance of a sports physiotherapist. Some athletes find this form of stretching useful in the later stages of their stretching programme which should always be preceded by an adequate warm-up.

Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation (PNF)

PNF stretching is performed by alternating contraction and relaxation of muscle groups. There are several different types of PNF stretching including "contract relax", "hold relax", and "contract-relax agonist contract". PNF stretching techniques may produce greater flexibility gains over other stretching techniques. These types of stretching techniques should ideally be formed with a partner or professional who is fully aware of the potential dangers associated with this technique.

Plyometric Exercises

Plyometric exercises are used by some athletes as part of their warm-up programme. Plyometrics essentially are a form of training that combines rapid eccentric muscle contraction (the muscle lengthens as it contracts) followed by a rapid concentric contraction (the muscle shortens as it contracts) to perform a fast forceful movement. The indication to incorporate plyometric exercises as part of the warm-up warm is based on the requirements of the individual athlete and of the sport. It is also very important to seek professional advice while doing Plyometric Exercises.

Muscle Strength Imbalance may increase the Risk of Injury

Muscle strength, power and endurance are important requirements for many athletic pursuits which can be enhanced by various types of resistance training techniques. It is very important that strengthening programmes are always graduated according to the athlete's ability and specifically meet the needs of the individual athlete. Muscles work in opposing muscle groups (agonists and antagonists) it is very important that a balanced exercise regime is designed to avoid development of muscle strength imbalances which can predispose the athlete to injury.

Appropriate Training Levels

It is very important that athletes ensure against overtraining which again can predispose the athlete to injury. The concept of Periodisation has proved to support best performance as it allows for the athlete's training year to be broken into separate phases to provide adequate time for rest and recovery and to avoid overload and overtraining.

Can Taping and Bracing help prevent Injury?

Taping and bracing are usually used to restrict excessive movement and potential harmful motion that might give rise to injury, studies have shown that taping can be help to prevent injury. Application of tape requires practice to prefect and should be instructed under the guidance of a sports physiotherapist.

Correct Sports Shoes & Orthotic Devices

Athletes should seek professional advice on correct running shoes, spikes, sports shoes and boots which is extremely important with respect to injury prevention. Where athlete's use orthotic devices for correction biomechanical issues it is always important to ensure that the orthotic device is correct not only for re-alignment but also for the specific type of sports shoe.
Protective Equipment
Protective equipment has been designed to shield various body parts against injury. In certain sports helmets are mandatory. Athletes should take advice on the appropriate level of protective equipment that should be used for example in certain sports dentists promote the use of correctly fitted custom made mouth guards.

Can Sports Equipment Contribute to the Risk of Injury?
It is very important to ensure that all items of sports equipment are biomechanically correct for the individual athlete, for example should the width of the grip of the tennis racquet be too wide or too narrow this may lead to injury problems such as ‘tennis elbow’. Athletes are strongly advised to have all their sports equipment biomechanically evaluated to ensure that their sports equipment meets their own individual needs, this should be done in consultation with the athlete’s coach and physiotherapist as part of the athlete’s planned injury prevention programme.

Always Consider your Sports Technique and Skill
In addition to ensuring that equipment meets the biomechanical requirements of the individual athlete it is also very important to ensure that the athlete’s sports technique is correct. There have been numerous studies illustrating the association between the incidence of injury and poor technique. For example, poor landing technique has shown an association with the onset of patellar tendinopathy (often called Jumper’s Knee).

In order to correct and/or improve technique athletes often require a team approach, collaboration between the coach and physiotherapist is essential. The physiotherapist may be required to prescribe specific exercises to target the muscle groups that need to be strengthened or activated.

Are there any other Factors that may Contribute to Injury?
Extrinsic factors such as training surfaces may contribute to injury, studies have shown that there is a greater incidence of injury where athletes train for prolonged hours on surfaces that are too hard or too springy. In order to minimise the risk of injury the environment should be appropriate, athletes should avoid slippery or uneven surfaces, and ensure adequate lighting.
Physiotherapy Treatment and Rehabilitation

A critical objective of the medical team is to ensure that the athlete recovers in the quickest time possible following injury. Obviously the severity of the injury will have a direct bearing on the duration of time lost as a consequence of injury.

In the event of injury, athletes should seek immediate advice from their team doctor and physiotherapist in order to minimise the effects of injury as soon as possible and in the fastest time possible.

The first 24 hours immediately following the injury is the most important time to manage soft tissue injuries. Every effort should be made to reduce bleeding at the site of the injury; the most appropriate method is by adopting the PRICE regime:

- Protect
- Rest
- Ice
- Compression
- Elevation
Why should athletes apply the PRICE regime?

The objective of the PRICE principle is to:

- Limit the extent of the injury.
- Reduce and control swelling.
- Allow return to sport and training in the shortest time possible.

The PRICE regime should be used for the first 24 to 48 hours.

Protect

When Injury Occurs how can athletes protect against further damage?

The athlete is strongly recommended to protect the injury from further injury or more extensive damage. The rational for protection after an acute soft tissue injury is to minimise the bleeding and prevent excessive distension at the injury site. For these reasons protection and soft tissue unloading is required in the acute stages. This means that stopping exercise is not sufficient, the athlete needs to stop all loading of the injured area e.g. in the case of an ankle soft tissue injury instead of standing the athlete should protect the area by taking body weight off the ankle by sitting or more ideally by lying down.

Ice

What methods should Athletes use?

Crushed ice wrapped in a moist cloth placed around the injured is more effective in reducing tissue temperature than gel packs or chemical cold packs. In the event of crushed ice not being available athletes should use whatever form of other cooling agents are available, cold pack, freeze spray, instant ice packs, cold water, ice–cups etc.

How should ice be applied?

Applying the ice with compression is more effective in reducing swelling, which can be done by tying the ice pack firmly to the injured part.

How often should ice be applied?

Although there is no high quality long term evidence to suggest how long and how often ice should be applied after injury a systemic review suggests that ice should be applied for 10 minutes, then check the skin, if you do not have skin irritation the ice can then be reapplied for a further 10 minutes. Ice should be applied every 1 to 2 hours initially and gradually reduced in frequency of application over the next 24 hours.

Be aware of the dangers of applying Ice!

- Ice should not be applied where local tissue circulation has been impaired.
- Prolonged ice application may cause skin burns and or nerve damage.
- Ice may temporarily impair muscle strength and may also cause temporary numbness, for these reasons it is very important to continue to rest in between icing sessions.

Rest

Is Rest necessary?

Immediate rest is essential. The athlete should stop the activity or exercise as continuing with exercise may cause further bleeding and damage. Resting not only form sporting activities but also resting from functional activities such as walking around is highly recommended during the first 24 hours following a lower limb soft tissue injury. Complete rest can be achieved by the use of a crutch for lower limb injury.
**Compression**

**How should Compression be applied?**

In between icing sessions you should continue to apply ice with appropriate pressure on the injured area. This can be done by:

- Wrapping a bandage firmly around the injured area in order to apply compression.
- A strap type bandage can be applied starting beyond the point of the injury and working towards the heart.
- The bandage should overlap by one-third to a half inch width and should extend to at least a hands breath proximal to the injury margin.

Or

- Using a cold therapy with compression cuff, this equipment is available in the physiotherapy department at the Olympic polyclinic.

**Elevation**

**How should the injured area be elevated?**

Keep your injured part elevated in order to reduce swelling. In the case of a leg injury you should ideally keep the leg elevated above the level of your heart by lying on the ground and resting your leg on a stool, sports bag etc.

In the case of the arm or hand place your arm in a sling, if not available lie on the ground and place your arm on the sports bag, bench etc.

**Seek Expert Advice**

After you’ve applied the PRICE regime you should seek medical attention from your team physician or physiotherapist as soon as possible. As soon as your injury has been evaluated and diagnosed you will then be advised of the best course of treatment and management to ensure your return to sport as soon as possible.
What should Athletes avoid doing during the first 24 to 48 hours following injury?

It is very important to avoid the following:

- Heat; i.e. hot baths or showers.
- Avoid using the injured area, e.g. reduce walking and weight bearing for lower limb injury.
- Strenuous activity; when you have been assessed by your medical team you will then be advised of when the appropriate level of exercise and training can be resumed.
- Massage; it is not advised to undertake massage for the first twenty-four hours following an acute soft tissue injury.

Physiotherapy Treatment

Following 24 – 48 hours of the PRICe regime physiotherapy can be of great benefit in resolving injury in the shortest time possible. There are many different forms of sports physiotherapy treatments, following assessment your physiotherapist will decide on the most appropriate type of treatment which can include:

Electrotherapy Modalities

Various electrotherapy modalities are available for the treatment of sports injuries, e.g. Laser, Ultrasound, Shockwave Therapy, Electrical Stimulation etc. Application will depend on the indications and requirements of your injury.

Manual therapy

Manual therapy incorporates a group of ‘hands-on’ treatments which the physiotherapist applies directly to the musculoskeletal system

- Joint mobilisation, manipulation and traction / distraction techniques.
- Soft tissue mobilisation, trigger point therapy, muscle energy techniques, myofascial release techniques etc.
- Neural stretching techniques.
- Massage, – various different massage techniques can be used depending the desired outcome.

Additional Sports Physiotherapy Treatments

In addition, treatments that are frequently used:

- Hydrotherapy including, whirlpools and jet massage.
- Acupuncture: the application of needles usually preformed for pain relief.
- Dry needling: Application of needles for the reduction of active trigger points in muscle

Exercise and Rehabilitation

The primary aim of injury rehabilitation is to enable the athlete to return to sport with full function in the shortest time possible. There are several components to a targeted effective rehabilitation programme these include;

- Muscle strength and conditioning
- Flexibility
- Neuromuscular control and balance
- Functional exercises
- Specific exercise to meet the requirements of the sport Correction of abnormal biomechanics
- Maintenance of cardiovascular fitness
Physiotherapy and Recovery

**Adequate Recovery**

Why should Recovery be included as part of the Athlete’s Training Strategy?

Adequate recovery is essential if the athlete is to benefit fully from training and to prevent against injury reoccurring. Recovery strategies are often associated with cool-down regimes. The major objectives of the cool-down/recovery process are:

- Restoration of function
- Neuromuscular recovery
- Tissue repair
- Resolution of muscle soreness
- Psychological recovery

**What Methods can be used to help with Recovery?**

Athletes are recommended to perform a cool-down and recovery strategy following the conclusion of intense exercise active. The length of the cool-down generally varies with the level of the athlete’s activity. Despite little scientific evidence of how effective passive methods are in post exercise recovery many athletes none the less often rely on a number of sports physiotherapy techniques to facilitate with recovery, such as:

- Cryotherapy – Contrast baths / Ice immersion
- Soft tissue massage
- Stretching Techniques
- Whirlpools etc.

**Rehydration**

What types of drinks should Athlete's use?

Part of the recovery strategy at all times must include rehydration as large amounts of fluid may be lost during exercise and exertion.

Rehydration strategies are very important and athletes should seek expert advice from the appropriate experts on the multidisciplinary team on the most appropriate rehydration strategy to meet both the needs of the individual athlete and the requirement of their particular sport.
The Role of Physiotherapy in Doping Control

Sports physiotherapists have a vital educational and ethical role to play in protecting the athlete against doping in sport.

Sports physiotherapists are ethically bound to follow the physiotherapist's charter and the IOC Medical Code in the fight against doping in sport.

Sports physiotherapists commit to the following:

- Keeping him/herself informed of the provisions of the world anti-doping code. This allows the physiotherapist to be of significant support and of help to the athlete in the fight against doping in sport.
- Undertakes to be informed of current developments in respect to the anti-doping code and is therefore in a position to inform athletes of risks and the classification of prohibitive substances and methods.
- Is in a position to advise the athlete of the risks to their health associated with doping.
- To advise athletes of the consequences as a result of positive dope tests.
- May often accompany the athlete to doping control.

Athletes are responsible for ensuring that any substances including supplements and drinks taken are allowed under the rules of the World Anti-doping Agency (WADA) and do not contain banned substances.

Compliance with Doping Control

An athlete can be selected for a drug test randomly at any time either in or out of competition.

How can the athlete avoid a positive drug test?

- Abide by the anti-doping rules of your sport.
- Take responsibility for any substances that you ingest.
- Seek medical advice before taking new medications.
- Ensure any medications you are presently on do not contain a banned substance or require the completion of a TUE form.

What is a TUE Form?

A TUE (therapeutic use exemption) form is completed if you need to be treated with a banned substance or method, this form must be completed and submitted 21 days prior to your competition event.

For further details on rules of Anti Doping and information on Drug Testing Procedures please see:

The International Olympic Committee’s Anti Doping Rules, applicable to the Olympic Games: www.olympic.org

Further information is also available on World Anti-doping Agency (WADA): www.wada-ama.org
Physiotherapy and Physical Therapies Services during the Olympic Games

The IOC Medical Commission ensures that physiotherapy and physical therapies services are provided for all participating athletes during the Olympic Games. These services are required to be of the highest standard and are provided by the Organising Committee in accordance with evidence based practice and are delivered by practitioners with recognised qualifications and appropriate experience.

Where are the Physiotherapy Services Located?

The IOC Medical Commission actively supports the provision of physiotherapy services at the Olympic Poly-Clinic, at competition and training venues and also provides resources for NOC medical teams to have treatment facilitates at their residence.

The physiotherapy services at the Poly-Clinic are available throughout the day and well into the evenings.

Massage Therapy

In addition, the IOC Medical Commission encourages the provision of sports massage services by suitably qualified personnel. Massage may be required by athletes for different reasons for example; to facilitate recovery or may be used as part of an athlete’s maintenance programme.

Physical Therapies

In addition to the traditional involvement of physiotherapy and sports massage services, in recent years there have been additional disciplines accredited to the physical therapies team in order to offer athletes a wider spectrum of treatment options. These additional disciplines have been primarily Osteopaths and Chiropractors. Other disciplines such as Sports Therapists and Sports Athletic Trainers where required may be accredited as part of the NOC’s medical team.

Training venues and Competition venues

The number of therapist’s covering competition venues varies depending on the requirements of the sport and the policies of the Organising Committee, in general there will be at least one physiotherapist covering the field of play and one physiotherapist covering medical station at every competition venue.

How can Athletes avail of the Physiotherapy Services during the Games?

All Olympic Athletes are entitled to avail of the physiotherapy, sports massage and physical therapies services provided by the Olympic Organising Committee, the referral policies will depend on the practicing policies of the host nation. In some countries athletes have direct access to physiotherapy services (i.e. a doctor’s referral is not required) and in many a doctor’s referral is required in order for an athlete to attend physiotherapy for treatment of an injury.
Prevent Injury and Maintain Optimal Health During the Games. Useful Tips for Athletes!

A Healthy Lifestyle Contributes to Better Performance

An essential ingredient in injury prevention strategies is maintenance of a healthy lifestyle. Athletes should ensure that they pay adequate attention to the following key factors which will contribute to optimum health with respect to achieving optimal sporting performance.

The Olympic village provides a safe secure area for athletes to live for the duration of the Games. Athletes and their support personnel occupy the Olympic Village at the time of the games. Life in the Olympic Village requires a certain level of adaptation, it is important that you know what to expect, much of the advice given in this section may sound like common sense but is nonetheless important to take note:

- **Avoid any unnecessary Stress and Strain:** Queuing is a feature of life in the Olympic Village. Be prepared for everything to take longer than you would expect in light of security checks when going in and out of the Village and going from one zone to the next you may be required to queue particularly at busy/peak times, avoid stress by allowing yourself plenty of time.

- **Keep to your Normal Routine:** Particularly during the time in the lead up to your competition. There can be many distractions in the Village such as entertainment in the international zone, leisure activities should be factored into the athlete’s day appropriately. Athletes are advised to get plenty of rest and to adhere to their normal sleeping routine.

- **Keep to your Normal Diet:** Ensure that you keep a healthy diet, check before drinking tap water. Restaurants in the Olympic Village are open 24 hours a day eating with food available, prior to your competition athletes are advised to adhere to their normal times and frequency of eating and are advised to avoid eating unfamiliar foods which may have a negative effect on athletic performance.

- **Avoid getting Tired Legs:** To help avoid fatigue when walking around the Olympic Village always use the internal transport system and try to plan your day insofar as you can to avoid unnecessary walking and standing where possible. Standing in queues and more walking than you would normally undertake can lead to tired legs and tight calves.

- **Avoid Unauthorised Treatments:** Athletes are discouraged from undergoing unauthorised treatment during the Olympic Games which are not provided by official Olympic medical personnel. Be aware of the ‘miracle’ workers often seen at the entrance to the Olympic Village who avail of the commercial opportunity to offer athletes unauthorised treatments.
• **Avoid Changes in your Exercise and Training Routine:** The Olympic Village will include a modern highly equipped gym. To avoid risk of injury, if you are not familiar with any of the apparatus or exercise equipment seek advice before use. Avoid trying out new exercise techniques which are not part of your normal exercise routine until after your event.

• **‘Wear-in’ Opening Ceremony Shoes:** On the night of the opening ceremony do not wear new shoes. Your uniform shoes for the opening ceremony should be worn-in prior to this major event. Wearing new shoes for the first time on the night of the opening ceremony can cause pressure points on your feet leading to blisters. Remember that the Opening Ceremony from the time of leaving your residence in the Olympic Village to return may take several hours.

• **Orthotics:** If you require the use of orthotic devices for correction of biomechanical problems you are advised to have them reviewed in appropriate time prior to the Olympic Games, as readjustments that may be required. Athletes are advised to bring at least two pairs of orthotic devices in the event of one pair being damaged or lost.

• **Avoid Back Pain:** You are advised to avoid carrying heavy sports bags to and from training and competition venues. Only carry what you need in your bag. Balance the load when you are carrying e.g. distribute your items into 2 bags or use a rucksack and carry on your back.

• **Avoid Infection:** Most bacteria / germs are spread from a surface to your hands and then to your face. Wash your hands, also carry an Anti-bacterial hand spray / hand wipes to use as required. Good hygiene will help to prevent infection.

For Your Best Performance, Look After Your Body.