

health talk



Get Stronger Now: Prehabilitation To Get You Into Fighting Form By Manni Wong - BScH, MScPT, CSCS, ART®

What is physical rehabilitation?

Physical rehabilitation is the process of restoring strength, mobility and function AFTER an injury (ie muscle tear) or event altering physical function (ie. stroke). Typically, the bulk of rehab is done with a professional (physiotherapist or chiropractor) directing your treatment and reassessing your progress through a rehab program. If you follow the program, your health outcomes are generally very good. However, there are times after an injury/event that the extent of tissue damage may make rehab a long and tenuous process. Furthermore, surgery may be needed. To prevent longer rehab times, a newer concept is now being emphasized in health care: prehabilitation.

What is prehabilitation and is it for me?

Prehabilitation is the process of preventing poor health outcomes from an injury or event BEFORE it happens. More specifically, it involves analyzing risk factors that may predispose you to future injury and attempting to correct those risk factors.

How do I do this? It depends what you are preventing.

Preventing Injury

When undergoing prehabilitation, an analysis of your movement, strength, flexibility and posture is conducted. Any weaknesses in these areas that predisposes you to injury during your daily physical demands or sport will be addressed with exercises and stretches. Due to the varied demands of each individual, not every prehab program will be the same. For example, the physical demands of a desk job worker are vastly different than that of a professional athlete. The physical demands between sports are also different.

It is important to get an individualized program targeted to your goals and needs. For example, if you are a basketball player, you may want to undergo prehab for ACL injuries as that is a common injury in basketball. For a runner, prehab can reveal mechanical faults or weakness that should be corrected to prevent overuse injuries like shin splints or IT band friction syndrome. For a desk job worker, a prehab program will identify and correct improper postures by strengthening postural muscles which will decrease the risk of many repetitive stress syndromes like carpal tunnel syndrome or upper cross syndrome. Prehab is even gaining traction in pre-pregnancy to prepare you for child birth.



Preventing Poor Surgical Outcomes

Another area prehab is becoming more prominent is pre-surgery. A recent study by Nielson et al. (2012) looked at sixty patients prior to spinal surgery. Half underwent prehab and the other went through standard surgical care. The patients that went through prehab reached post-surgical milestones faster, shorter hospital stays and higher satisfaction with the surgical outcomes. These results are not surprising as surgical outcomes tend to be better when you are fit and strong. The theory is that if you go into a surgery stronger, you come out strong. Being strong post surgery can improve your outcomes as you have already done

some of the rehab before the surgery. If you are undergoing a specific type of surgery (ie total knee replacement), a custom prehab program can be designed for you which will target muscles that need to be strong for full recovery.

What can I do now?

If you are interested in discussing the process of prehab, both prior to injury or surgery, please contact one of the healthcare professionals at Form and Function. We also have several prehab programs already in place such as ACL prevention and running mechanic analysis. We can answer any of your questions or concerns regarding these programs and prehab in general.

