Sport Participation and Risk of Osteoarthritis

Sport participation may increase the risk of osteoarthritis (OA), but it is unclear whether this is due to the specific sport, a sport-related injury, or some other unknown factor. One study has found participation in certain sports (eg, soccer, elite-level long-distance running (marathon training), competitive weight lifting (Olympic), wrestling may be associated with knee osteoarthritis (OA) later in life (study). The magnitudes of association were relatively large: those in elite long-distance running, soccer, weight lifting, and wrestling had a prevalence 3 to 7 times that for unexposed persons. Participation in non-elite (high school) American football was also associated with a higher prevalence of knee OA: approximately 9 times higher, but the range was large. Additionally, elite-level throwing, handball, cross-country skiing, ice hockey, and orienteering were classified as possibly associated with an increased prevalence of knee and hip arthritis. Other studies on elite tennis players showed advance arthritic changes as well (Study). Racket sports has also been shown to hasten knee degeneration in overweight people with osteoarthritis, according to research. Those who participated in racket sports regularly had a higher degree of knee degeneration when compared with participants who regularly used an elliptical trainer during the 4 years of the study. Those in the jogging and running group in a study of overweight subjects also saw less knee degeneration than those in the racket sports group.Those who used the elliptical trainer saw the smallest amount of changes to their knee degeneration during the 4-year period. **There is no increased risk of symptomatic knee osteoarthritis among normal weight runners compared with non-runners in a cohort recruited. In those without osteoarthritis, running does not appear detrimental to the knees (see study).**

A study from the American Journal of Sports Medicine (study) found elite male athletes who participate in high-contact sports like football, soccer and rugby have a higher risk of developing knee and hip arthritis later in life than men who exercise a little or not at all. About 30 percent of athletes had hip or knee arthritis, compared to 19 percent who weren't athletes. The researchers found the risk of having hip or knee arthritis was 85% higher in elite athletes. To further this athletes who had joint surgery, the risk more than doubled, in other words joint surgery may increase your chances of arthritis (study). The group of retired athletes included men involved in high-contact sports such as soccer and hockey, and those who participated in non-contact sports like running, swimming and cycling. The author recommends activities that don't have the same risk of injury such as swimming, cycling, moderate running, and yoga. They also suggest, as I do, that there are strategies in every sport to decrease injury, which includes proper form and overall fitness regimen. It also must be stressed that if you have an injury, make sure you're recovered and rehabilitated before returning to the sport. **From the aforementioned studies it is clear that many contact and change in direction sports carries joints risks.**

Many health authorities suggest physical activity regardless of the type of sport may have health benefits that outweigh the risk of arthritis, like cardiovascular fitness, lower rates of obesity and lower blood pressure as well as other benefits like confidence building and teamwork that comes from being on a team. If you are going to do a sport make sure you condition for the sport and pick sports that do not have contact.