

RIBBLE VALLEY AC

THE STITCH - AN ATHLETES NIGHTMARE!!

Why do we get stitches?

How can we prevent them?

Introduction

- Stitches are uncomfortable; painful and AFFECT our PERFORMANCE
- Pain usually occurs in our abdominal area during exercise
- The pain can be sharp, stabbing, cramping or aching
- The pain is most common in the right side of our body (under the RIBS) – but it can be felt on the left and even on the tip of our shoulder in some cases!
- Usually occurs when we are running after we have eaten

Possible Causes

- Downhill and sustained fast running
- Nerves, cold weather and constitutional factors may also be causes
- Right side is most common because our liver mass is larger on this side – therefore jolting up and down after food/drink may cause discomfort/stitch
- Most people always breath on the same side – we usually inhale and exhale on the same foot strike i.e. right or left

Possible ways of combating stitches

Breathe out as opposite foot to painful side lands

- Belly breathing (using your diaphragm) * we will practise this at one of our circuit sessions
- Abdominal Training – gym sessions in the winter will help in this area

Suggested Measures to Prevent Stitches

- Avoid excessive food and drink in 1-3 hours before training and racing
- Avoid hypertonic fluids • Experiment with pre-training diets
- Start sessions SLOWLY
- Good warm up before racing/competing – ALWAYS START SLOWLY
- Periodically change foot you land on during inhalation and exhalation
- Room deep diaphragm breathing
- Train abdominal muscles (SIT UPS) – these should always be done SLOWLY with good TECHNIQUE
- The fitter we are the less likely we are to get a stitch
- Periodically take deeper breaths whilst running
- USE ARMS CORRECTLY

What should you do if you get a stitch?

- If pain is severe – lie down with legs elevated – pain should ease rapidly
- Breathe out forcibly as opposite foot to pain hits the ground
- Take deep breaths (use diaphragm) and avoid panting
- Tighten abdominal muscles and maintain tightness
- Bend forward pressing fist or fingers up under ribs on affected side
- Lean forward or back, left or right to change pressure on stomach muscles
- Stretch arm up over head on affected side
- Massage chest under AXILLA on affected side