

Blisters

Prevention and Cures

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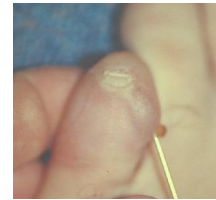
Blisters are a common concern in any athletic endeavor. They are an injury to the skin resulting from friction from the skin against the sock or shoe. The layers of the skin separate and fluid fills the space between resulting in the blister. In some cases a small blood vessel, called a capillary, gets damaged with the result being a “blood blister” or blister filled with blood.

The best way to deal with blisters is to **prevent them**. They commonly form over bumps or boney prominences on the toes or back of the heel. These are usually initially seen as “hot spots” or red spots after activity and with longer duration of activity may develop into blisters. When a “hot spot” is discovered it must be protected to prevent damage to the skin. This can occur through the use of pads, tape or shoe modifications to prevent friction. Using acrylic moisture-wicking socks are better than cotton socks to prevent blisters. In some cases a two-layered sock can be beneficial to allow the two layers of the sock the rub together instead of rubbing on the skin. Lubricants can be used to prevent friction in addition to sock measures. Socks and shoes should **NEVER** be used the first time for any competition but rather used in training events initially. During wetter conditions or in regions with higher humidity it may be necessary to change socks to prevent blister formation.

Once a blister has developed it must be addressed properly to prevent infection and further pain or loss of training time. The amount of fluid that has collected results in increased pressure and increased pain. If no pain is present it is best to monitor the blister prior to releasing the fluid. If significant pain is associated with it, the pressure should be released to allow the pain to be relieved and prevent further damage to the underlying skin. The release of fluid must be done cleanly to prevent infection (see next column):

Puncture of Blister:

1. Clean the blister with alcohol/Betadine (if not allergic to iodine/Betadine).
2. Use a new or sterile needle.
3. Puncture the skin so that fluid can drain (as close as possible to sole of foot to allow gravity drainage).



4. **DO NOT PEEL OFF THE BLISTERED SKIN** - the skin is nature's own bandage.
5. Apply Betadine to dry the region.



6. If the region becomes increasingly red or swollen see a physician immediately.

The best treatment of a blister is to prevent it throughout the training process. In those rare circumstances where they do develop the proper treatment will prevent further complications and delay in healing. This will result in less down-time and an earlier return to competition.