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Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy for Lower-Extremity Soft-Tissue Sports Injuries

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Abstract

Lower-extremity injuries have become increasingly common as sports performance demands have risen. Hyperbaric oxygen therapy is one method used to return athletes to competition as quickly as possible, but it has received criticism and lacks support. This review examines the literature on hyperbaric oxygen therapy and soft-tissue sports injuries. In the various studies, the location of the injury seemed to influence the effectiveness of treatment. Injuries at areas of reduced perfusion such as muscle–tendon junctions and ligaments seemed to benefit more from hyperbaric oxygen treatment than injuries at the muscle belly. Differences in the magnitude of the injury and in the time between injury and treatment may also affect outcomes. The authors sought to explore these variables as they relate to soft-tissue sports injuries and to weigh the benefits of hyperbaric oxygen therapy against its potential risks and high cost. More randomized controlled clinical trials with larger sample sizes must be conducted before hyperbaric oxygen can be established as a safe adjunctive therapy for soft-tissue sports injuries. (*J Am Podiatr Med Assoc* 93(4): 298-306, 2003)

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