



Sports medicine and orthopedics: How they work together

Q&A with **Dr. Tyler Kupchick**, Orthopedic Sports Medicine Surgeon at Henry Ford Medical Center – Chelsea

Whether you are a student athlete, a weekend warrior or someone who simply wants to stay active, injuries and joint pain can disrupt the activities you enjoy. Here are some common questions about sports medicine and orthopedic care.

What's the difference?

- **Sports medicine:** Focuses on the prevention, diagnosis, surgical and nonsurgical treatment of injuries related to physical activity and movement. Sports medicine physicians are trained to treat athletes and active individuals of all ages, helping them recover from injuries and return safely to their sport or activity.
- **Orthopedics:** Focuses on the musculoskeletal system, including bones, joints, ligaments, tendons and muscles. Orthopedic specialists diagnose and treat conditions ranging from arthritis and fractures to ligament tears and joint injuries. When surgery is needed, orthopedic surgeons perform procedures designed to restore function and mobility.

The two specialties often work closely together. Many injuries begin with sports medicine evaluation and treatment, and sometimes transition to orthopedic specialists within the same care team.

How does sports medicine injury recovery work?

Sports medicine providers help you recover from an injury safely and return to activity as quickly as possible. Care often includes:

- Comprehensive injury evaluation and diagnosis
- Nonsurgical treatment plans tailored to your sport and goals
- Rehabilitation guidance and coordination with physical therapy
- Return-to-play assessments to ensure you're ready to resume activity safely

Sports medicine physicians treat a wide range of conditions, including sprains, strains, tendinitis, overuse injuries, concussions and joint pain. If you need additional testing or imaging, Henry Ford Medical Center – Chelsea offers convenient on-site lab services and imaging, helping streamline diagnosis and treatment so you can begin recovery sooner.

Can sports medicine help me prevent injuries?

Absolutely. Sports medicine is not only about treating injuries, but it also focuses on keeping athletes healthy and performing at their best.

Preventive care may include:

- Movement and biomechanics assessments
- Strength and conditioning recommendations
- Injury prevention strategies specific to your sport
- Education on proper training techniques and recovery

By identifying risk factors early, sports medicine specialists can help you avoid injuries that could sideline you during a season.

One way we do this is through sports physicals, which help student athletes and families prepare for the upcoming sports season. During a sports physical, providers review your medical history, evaluate overall health and ensure you are ready to participate safely in athletic activities. These visits are also an opportunity to discuss injury prevention, training concerns and any past injuries.

What if my doctor says surgery is needed?

In many cases, surgery does not mean a long hospital stay or extended recovery. Minimally invasive arthroscopic procedures are often an option, allowing surgeons to diagnose and treat joint conditions using small incisions and advanced camera technology.

These outpatient procedures offer several benefits, including expedited recovery times, a lower risk of complications such as infection, and the use of nerve blocks that can help patients leave with little to no pain for the first 18 to 24 hours after surgery.

Henry Ford Health specialists use state-of-the-art camera systems for accurate diagnosis and precise repair, improving outcomes and recovery experiences. Arthroscopic techniques are also highly versatile and can be used to treat a wide range of joints, including the shoulder, elbow, wrist, hip, knee and ankle.