PULLED OR TORN: INJURIES AFFECTING THE HAMSTRING

Three hamstring muscles span the base of the pelvis to the top of the lower leg and are vital for walking and running. Injuries range from pulls to tears and may cause lasting effects without prompt, proper care. Hamstring injuries are common in sports, particularly during sprinting.

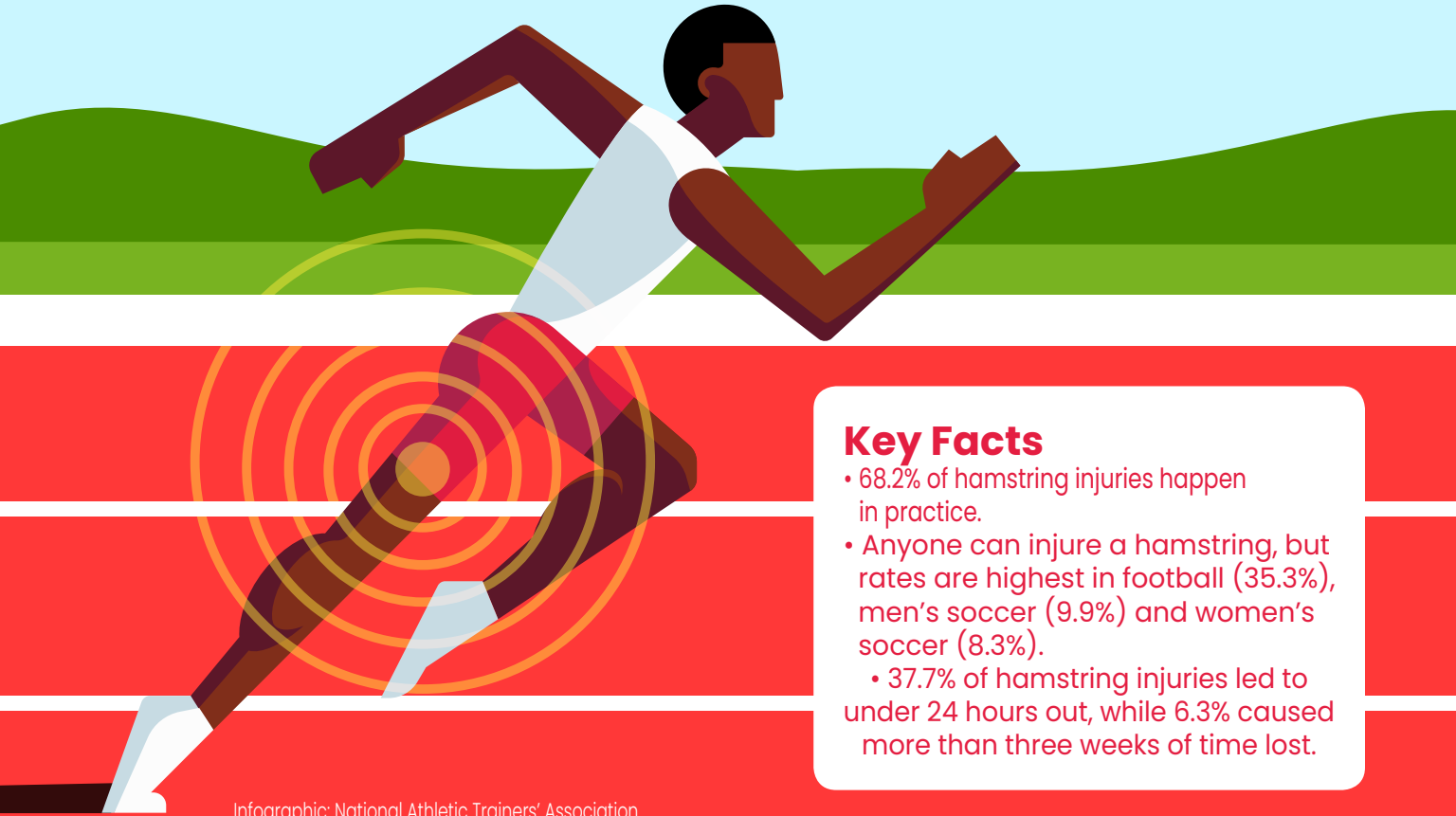
SIGNS OF A HAMSTRING INJURY

Muscle overload is the main cause of hamstring injury. Tight, tired, unbalanced or poorly conditioned muscles raise the risk. Common injury signs include:

- Sudden, sharp pain at the back of the thigh
- Inability to walk or bear weight on the leg
- Swelling during the first few hours
- Bruising or discoloration in the first few days
- Hamstring weakness that may last for weeks

TREATMENT CHOICES

If you suspect a hamstring injury, see your athletic trainer or health care provider. They will tailor treatment to your needs and injury severity. Options may be nonsurgical, such as RICE (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation), or surgical.



Key Facts

- 68.2% of hamstring injuries happen in practice.
- Anyone can injure a hamstring, but rates are highest in football (35.3%), men's soccer (9.9%) and women's soccer (8.3%).
- 37.7% of hamstring injuries led to under 24 hours out, while 6.3% caused more than three weeks of time lost.

Infographic: National Athletic Trainers' Association
References: American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, American Journal of Sports Medicine, National Athletic Trainers' Association