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In-Line Skating / Rollerblading

Currently, more than 17 million people in the U.S. participate in In-Line Skating, (also called rollerblading) In-line skates have been around for centuries, but only became commercially available in 1987. In-Line Skating surged in the 1980's, but dropped off after 2001 and, recently, has seen resurgence in participation.

The health benefits of in-line skating are on par with both cycling and running. At a steady, comfortable rate a person can burn 285 calories in 30 minutes and much more using an alternating level of hard skating and easy skating. There are aerobic and anaerobic benefits as well. In addition, in-line skating is less harmful to the joints than running.

Although in-line skating injuries are not as frequent or severe as basketball, soccer, softball or bicycling, participants sometimes do incur abrasions or "road rashes." Injuries happen most frequently to intermediate level users, but can happen to anyone at any other skill level.

Perhaps most interesting is that most injuries occur from a "spontaneous loss of balance" (e.g. caused by fatigue or tripping over one's own foot) or "striking a stationary hazard" (i.e., mostly hitting or tripping over a road defect or debris). It is also interesting to note that while most skaters wear little protective equipment, the most common kinds of safety protection are knee pads, despite the fact that wrist injuries are much more common than knee injuries. Wearing wrist guards helps prevent injury because it allows the wrist to slide along the pavement rather than having the wrist absorbing all the shock of a fall directly.

When skating outside we see that hazardous road conditions, skating out of control and fatigue as the most common causes of accidents.

Note that the Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that up to 1/3 of serious skating injuries could be eliminated by wearing wrist guards alone!

Protective Gear

We recommend that all persons who want to engage in rollerblading should:

- Take lessons - learning how to stop, balance, and maintain speed control and avoiding hazards such as heavy traffic, hills, uneven surfaces and obstacles is important. These skills are critical to know and help ensure a safe, fun activity when skating (*outside of the gym and*) around the neighborhood.
- Wear the appropriate personal protective equipment - at a minimum, wrist guards, elbow pads, knee pads and helmets.
- Wearing some bright colored clothing as a good way to increase visibility.
- For extra protection, we recommend wearing long pants and long-sleeved shirts beneath your pads, light-weight gloves for finger protection and a mouth guard.
- Yield to pedestrians and follow all traffic rules when rollerblading outside.
- Take a few minutes before to check your skates - rotate your wheels, wipe down your bearings, check your spacers and inspect your brake system components. This will help ensure you have a safe and enjoyable skating experience each time you head out.
- We also recommend warm up and stretching exercises prior to any rollerblading activity.*1



Developing Skills



Indoor In-Line Skating is a great way to develop skills. Learning and practicing indoors, offers consistent conditions and builds technique, fitness, power, agility and tactical awareness. Using these skills is important, but there will be a "learning curve" as a person begins to use them outdoors. The outdoors has varying conditions and the transition includes:

- Skating on rougher surfaces such as asphalt
- Lots of straightaways, fewer corners and occasional down-hills - at higher speeds. skates will track differently so the speed and angle of push will be different.
- Exposure to many more obstacles - such as leaf piles, pine needles, sand, gravel, rocks, twigs, trash, tar snakes (tar used to fill road cracks), and an occasional dead animal.
- Changes in the weather.
- Sharing the path with walkers, runners, skateboarders and bicyclists.
- Sharing the street with cars, trucks, and motorcycles in addition to all the others.

Rules of the Road

We recommend that skaters would be wise to follow these basic:

Rules of the Road*²

Skate Smart

- * Always wear your protective gear-helmet, wrist protection, elbow pads, knee pads
- * Master the basics-striding, stopping, and turning
- * Keep your equipment in proper working order



Skate Legal

- * Obey all traffic regulations. When on skates, you should consider yourself to be subject to the same obligations as a bicyclist or a driver of an automobile

Skate Alert

- * Skate under control at all times
- * Watch out for road hazards
- * Avoid water, oil, and sand
- * Avoid traffic

Skate Polite

- * Skate on the right, pass on the left
- * Announce your intentions by saying, "passing on your left"
- * Always yield to pedestrians

*² Inline Skating Resource Center

References and Resources

*¹ Exercises: Beginning Balance Exercises for rollerblading are the single-leg Romanian deadlift exercise and the single-leg lift and chop. These types of exercises help increase joint stabilization and prepare the body for more advanced balance exercises. When performing these balance exercises, complete 1-3 sets of 6-12 repetitions per leg and use a slow tempo. You can rest anywhere from 0-90 seconds between the sets. The goal of these exercises is to maintain control of the movement and also to work on endurance of the stabilizing muscles used for balance. To perform the single-leg Romanian deadlift, stand on one leg with the other foot lifted and floating next to the foot on the ground. Slowly bend at the hip and reach toward the foot on the ground, pause, and slowly return to a standing position. To perform the single-leg lift and chop, stand on one leg with the other foot lifted and floating next to the foot on the ground. Hold a light medicine ball with both hands at the outside hip of the foot that is down; start the movement by slowly taking the ball from the side and bringing it up above the opposite shoulder. Pause at the top of the movement and then slowly return to the starting position. For both exercises, make sure you are using the core by drawing-in the stomach, and if you lose your balance use the lifted foot to stabilize yourself. Once you have mastered the basic movements, progress by using less stable surfaces like a half foam roll, Airex pad, or dyna disc under the balance foot.

Examples of Basic Core Exercises for rollerblading include the two-leg floor bridge and prone-iso abs, or plank. The core is the center of the body and where all human movement begins. It is important to have a strong core because it provides stability and force control necessary during rollerblading. The basic core exercises involve little movement of the spine and hips. They are designed to work on building core muscle endurance and to teach you how to activate the core muscles. To activate the core muscles, use the drawing-in movement and bracing. Drawing-in is bringing the belly button in toward the spine or sucking in the stomach. Bracing is contracting the abs, lower back, and butt muscles at the same time. Both of these movements are important for core stabilization and the basic core exercises will prepare you for more advanced core exercises. To perform the two-leg bridge, lie on your back with the knees bent and feet flat on the ground about hip-width apart. Start the movement by pushing through the heels and driving the hips up in the air; hold at the top and then slowly return to the ground. To perform the prone-iso abs, or plank, lie on your stomach with the elbows under the shoulders and the forearms on the ground. Lift your body up until you are in a flat back position, hold and then return to the ground. Perform 1-2 sets of 15 repetitions of each exercise, holding at the top position for 2 seconds and using a slow tempo. To progress the exercises and make them harder, you can perform single-leg versions or hold for longer time at top. - **National Academy of Sports Medicine**

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