

Blisters

By Dr. Boyd Williams
Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician

A blister is caused by repeated rubbing or friction on the skin. The skin's outer layer, the epidermis, is lifted away from the layer below, resulting in a collection of fluid in the open space. As the skin tissue is peeled away, nerve endings become exposed, making the blister site very painful.

Most blisters occur early in the training season when the skin is soft and not adapted to the rubbing stress. Blisters may occur in the hand or palm with racket sports, but are most common on the feet. The skin on the foot of the athlete is subject to constant pressures and few people care for their feet properly. Friction from new or ill-fitting shoes produces problems, especially on the heels.

The key to treating blisters is prevention. Wearing two pairs of socks, while making sure to get out the wrinkles, helps a lot. A lubricant, like Vaseline, will reduce the friction between the foot and shoe, as does putting a strip of cloth tape over a "rubbed area" before the blister forms.

If a blister does form, it should not be popped open. The fluid may be released by using a sterile needle, being sure not to cut the skin away. The area should then be covered with a sterile dressing. If the roof of the blister is torn away and infection is suspected, professional care should be sought.

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