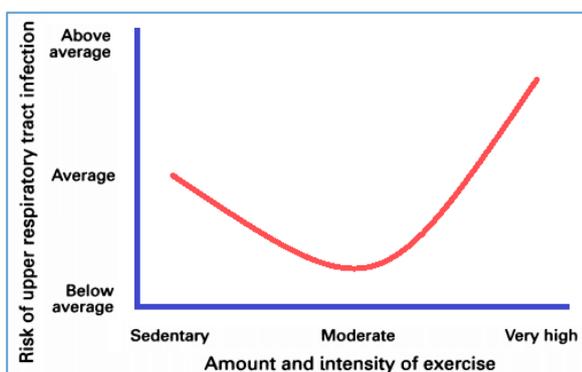


Minimising Sickness

Exercise *duration, intensity and frequency* places various degrees of ‘stress’ on the immune system and combined with recovery, exercise capacity, non-training stress factors, and stress tolerance this begins to explain the different vulnerability of athletes to illness, particularly in the lead up to competition.



Dampening of the immune response is called ‘immunosuppression’ which means your immune system temporarily becomes more fragile and less able to fight everyday viruses and germs leaving you more susceptible to minor infections

Following a hard training session/race your immune system is also suppressed for ~2 hours afterwards

NOTIFY YOUR COACH PRIOR TO ATTENDING TRAINING IF YOU ARE SICK

During periods of immunosuppression, it becomes very important to take particular care in looking after yourself and control the controllable with regards to recovery, sleep and nutrition (see relevant factsheets).



SOCIAL/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is not just around training you need to be diligent; for social settings it is more important your immune system is highly functioning as these are the most likely situations when you will get sick

- Don't train if you have symptoms below the neck
- Minimise contact with infected/sick people, young children and avoid *touching* other people's hands
- Where possible and practical avoid crowds of people to minimise the risk of picking up any colds/illnesses, particularly in the 2h window following hard exercise
- When sick use antibacterial hand wash and minimize touching your face and eyes as these are some of the quickest ways a virus can enter your body
- Change hand towels at home regularly to minimize the chance of infection
- The important sleep hours are the ones before midnight
- Be realistic about what you achieve in a day. Sickness and viruses are an added physiological stressor and take their toll on the body.
- Don't overcommit yourself during non-training times otherwise you will compromise your recovery. Down times are for recovery
- Manage your stress. If you are stressed about sport, family, work or financial matters seek some guidance. If you are chronically stressed your thresholds for exercise-induced wear and tear may be reduced.

