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 Social Support Patterns of Collegiate Athletes Before and After Injury. *Journal of Athletic Training*: July/August 2010, Vol. 45, No. 4, pp. 372-379.

Original Research

Social Support Patterns of Collegiate Athletes Before and After Injury

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Abstract

Context: Social support has been identified as an important factor in facilitating recovery from injury. However, no previous authors have prospectively assessed the change in social support patterns before and after injury.

Objective: To examine the preinjury and postinjury social support patterns among male and female collegiate athletes.

Design: Prospective observational study.

Setting: A Big Ten Conference university.

Patients or Other Participants: A total of 256 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I male and female collegiate athletes aged 18 or older from 13 sports teams.

Main Outcome Measure(s): Injury incidence was identified using the Sports Injury Monitoring System. Social support was measured using the 6-item Social Support Questionnaire. Data on preinjury and postinjury social support patterns were compared.

Results: Male athletes reported more sources of social support than female athletes, whereas female athletes had greater satisfaction with the support they received. Athletes' social support patterns changed after they became injured. Injured athletes reported relying more on coaches ($P = .003$), athletic trainers ($P < .0001$), and physicians ($P = .003$) for social support after they became injured. Athletes also reported greater postinjury satisfaction with social support received from friends ($P = .019$), coaches ($P = .001$), athletic trainers ($P < .0001$), and physicians ($P = .003$).

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Conclusions: Our findings identify an urgent need to better define the psychosocial needs of injured athletes and also strongly suggest that athletic trainers have a critical role in meeting these needs.

Keywords: [psychology](#), [athletic trainers](#)

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