

Where do cyclists get injured?

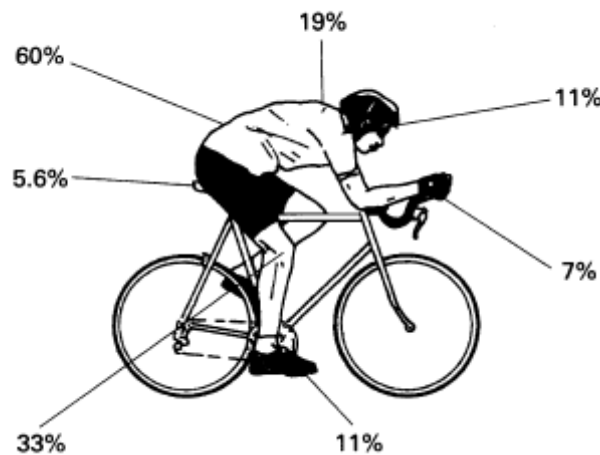
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There are only a handful of studies out there that look at the frequency of cycling injuries, most information is anecdotal, based on the types of injuries that present in physical therapy clinics or at training camps, or which cyclists report themselves. In the US cycling injuries account for over 500,000 visits to A&E departments, over half of these related to incidents with cars, and with road surfaces and mechanicals also common causes of accidents. However my focus will be on injuries you can prevent rather than those of a traumatic kind.

In the US, three different studies looked at male and female recreational cyclists and noted the most common areas for pain. One study found that that 85% of participants had one or more over use injuries. All three studies found that the most common areas for complaint were the neck, knees, groin/buttocks, hands, and back.

In Manchester an interesting study was carried out on elite cyclists where they screened athlete over a period of 5 years for injury or medical problems. In contrast with the recreational cyclists, low back pain featured as the most common complaint, and then the knee, and upper back. The frequency of injuries in various areas is shown in the figure below.

Figure 1: Areas of cycling injury and their frequency



The British study also looked at the breakdown of the back and knee injuries by cycling discipline; mountain bike, road, track, a combination (cyclists who did more than one discipline), and all (where the cyclist participated in all disciplines). Track and road cycling account for 60-70% for these injuries. See the diagrams below.

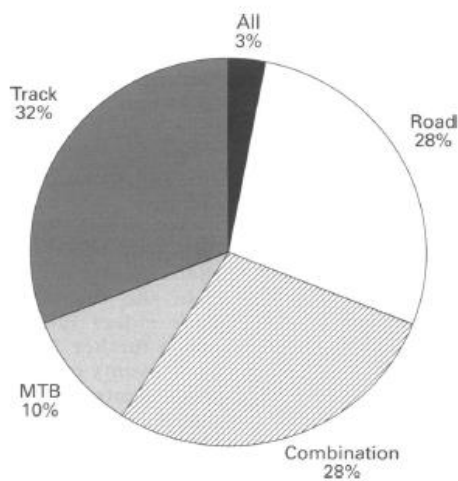


Figure 2: Source of knee injuries

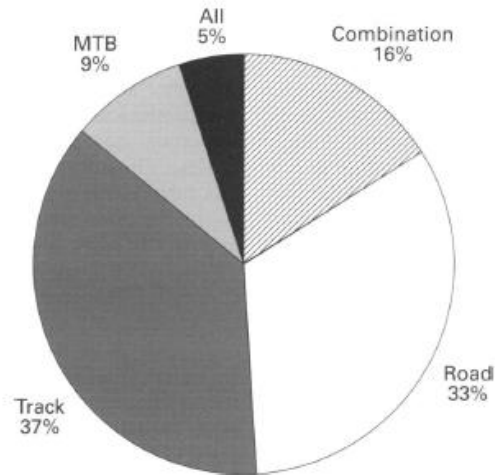


Figure 3: Source of low back injuries

You may have identified yourself as one of the 85% of cyclists with an over use injury. When looking for the root cause, don't forget to look also at your non cycling activities – are you seated at a desk all day, do you do manual heavy lifting work, do you drive for work? The various positions and postures we adopt through out the day can be a contributor to the pain felt after a few hours in the same position on the bike. This will be explored more when I discuss strategies to prevent injuries in the susceptible areas over the coming months.

References

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