



Consideration for use of Fitness Training Balls

Fitness training balls, also known as stability and exercise balls, are commonly used at fitness facilities around the country. They are typically rugged and durable, but are not without limits. When not used in a proper manner and within manufacturer's recommendations, they can burst. Injuries when using this equipment have been seen for a number of years. In 2009 the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommended the recall of nearly 3 million exercise balls due to a number of reports of various injuries to consumers. The majority of these and continuing injuries are due to improper use rather than equipment defect. Facilities can help to avoid injuries when using this equipment by following a number of good practices listed below.

Product Selection

Most training balls are designed to withstand common use during exercise. They are usually labeled with a user weight limit; listed on the ball near the air valve. The listed weight limit is the maximum amount of weight the ball can support. This includes the user's body weight along with any weight equipment. The maximum limit should be clearly listed on the ball. Training balls are also available in various sizes. These sizes follow suggested user height recommendations by manufacturers. It is generally considered good practice to ensure that equipment is designed for the commercial setting. In addition, efforts should be made to ensure that training balls have been purchase since 2010. A number of additional features are available including some balls that are designed to deflate rather than pop during high stress.

Proper Usage

It is common for training balls to not be properly inflated according to the American Fitness Institute. Underinflating this piece of training equipment can cause leaks and affect a user's stability while exercising. Poor stability can lead to injuries of the lower back and other strains. Proper care and cleaning are also important. Training balls should not be left outdoors, in the sun or regularly exposed to heat, salt water or chlorine. Exposure to these elements can cause material stress that allows equipment failure.

Summation

Facilities should ensure that a selection of equipment is available that suits the various sizes and skills of users. An area that has appropriate space should be designated for the use of training balls. Instruction should be offered so that users are aware of how to properly use the equipment. All equipment should be regularly inspected with the results documented. Training balls should be properly inflated and used within manufacturer's recommendations. Equipment that has been purchased since 2010, is designed for commercial use and is properly inflated can help reduce the incidence of injuries.

The information contained in this document is for illustrative purposes only and should not be construed as strict recommendations for use of the described equipment. Proper supervision, use guidelines and safe operation of equipment is the responsibility of the owner/operator. Manufacturer recommendations should be followed at all times. Information in this document was gathered from a number of resources including the CPSC, the American Fitness Institute and Livestrong.