

My careless behavior with what I put into my body spilled over into basketball. Of course, I listened to my coach and worked out when I was supposed to, but I was a standout player then because I was naturally talented. I ran the floor with ease, I was taller than most of my teammates, and I never got hurt. I absolutely despised stretching, I just wanted to be on the court playing. That worked well enough in high school that I got a basketball scholarship to Notre Dame. When I got to college, though, everything changed.

There is a big jump from high school to the college game. The women are stronger, faster, and everyone plays harder. It was a shock for me, and while I was figuring out the next level, I tore my ACL in my left knee my freshman year. I was devastated; basketball was all I had known for most of my life. I knew I wanted to be back on the court and get back to how I was used to playing. I worked overtime to rehab my knee and to get back into shape. I overdid it, though, and eight months later I tore my ACL again.

That second injury took me to a crossroads with playing basketball. I took a week to gather my thoughts and decided to give it one more shot. Over that week, I asked myself the important question of why my body had failed me. The second time around, during my therapy process, I took the time to learn about the causes of my injuries, what I could do to prevent another ACL tear, and what I should be eating to make sure my body was in the right shape.

Those injuries led me to completely change my views on my body and my health. I learned that everything in your body is connected, so the knee pain that I was experiencing could be from a tight back or tight hamstrings. The days of me jumping on the court without stretching were over. I can't tell you how much time I spend with a foam roller, loosening up my legs muscles. I learned proper form when running and jumping,

which is especially important for women. I built up my strength in the weight room, too, lifting weights three or four times a week.

I also learned more about what to eat and how your body processes food. Flaming hot Cheetos as a pre-practice snack does not provide the proper energy to make it through a practice or a workout. Now I've cut beef and pork out of my diet again, and cook regularly. I love experimenting with different seafood dishes and pastas.

Changing my habits paid off. I finished my college career without any other injuries, and taking care of my body has enabled me to succeed as a professional athlete.

I have come to recognize that living a healthy lifestyle is a constant learning process. Your life changes, your body changes and you have to learn and grow with it. Throughout my career I've had nine surgeries! There is so much I know now about my body that I wish I would've known when I was younger. But even beyond playing basketball professionally, my health is so much more important to me now than when I was younger. Leading a healthy lifestyle helps me look and feel great, and I will continue to work to make sure my body is right where it needs to be.

