

Common Injuries for Young Athletes



Football Players



Among young athletes, football is one of the most popular fall sports played. In 2007, more than 900,000 young athletes under the age of 18 were treated in an emergency room, doctor's office and walk-in clinics for injuries related to football.

What types of injuries are most common?

- **Traumatic Injuries**– Knee injuries are the most common, especially ACL and PCL. Knee injuries can adversely affect a player's long-term involvement in football. Shoulder injuries are the second most common traumatic injury in football. The labrum (cartilage bumper surrounding the socket part of the shoulder) is particularly susceptible to injury.
- **Concussions**– A concussion is a change in mental state due to a traumatic impact (such as being tackled). Not everyone who has a concussion will lose consciousness. Some symptoms are: headache, dizziness, nausea, loss of balance, drowsiness, numbness/tingling, difficulty concentrating, and blurry vision.
- **Overuse Injuries**– Low-back pain is a very common overuse injury. Muscle soreness from over activity is one of the most common causes of low back pain. Muscles and ligament fibers can be overstretched or injured.
- **Heat Injuries**– Heat injuries are a growing concern– especially in Florida. Intense physical activity can result in excessive sweating that depletes the body of salt and water.



Baseball/Softball Players



Shoulder and elbow injuries in young baseball players is on the rise. Thousands of young baseball players are seen every year with shoulder and/or elbow pain caused by pitchers throwing too much.

If a young athlete is throwing too hard, too much, or too early, a serious elbow or shoulder injury may occur. If a young athlete complains of elbow or shoulder pain the day after throwing, or movement of the elbow or shoulder is painful or restricted, consult a physician immediately.

Overuse injuries– especially those related to the elbow and shoulder– are preventable! Some useful tips to keep your child in the game include:

- Proper warm-up; which includes stretching, running, easy and gradual throwing
- Rotate positions while on the field
- Concentrate on age-appropriate pitching
- Adhere to pitching count guidelines
- Avoid pitching on multiple teams with overlapping seasons
- Don't pitch while you have elbow or shoulder pain
- Communicate regularly about how your arm feels
- Emphasize control, accuracy, and good mechanics
- Talk with a sports medicine trainer or sports medicine physician if you have any concerns about injuries

See our separate hand-out on recommended pitching guidelines!



Soccer Players



Soccer is one of the world's most popular sports and is growing very rapidly in the US. Soccer provides young athletes with a good aerobic exercise, and helps players develop balance, agility, and coordination.

Injuries to the lower extremities are among the most common in young athletes.

What types of injuries are most common?

- **Lower Extremity Injuries**– Sprains or strains to the lower extremities are the most common injuries to soccer players. Cartilage tears and ACL injuries to the knee are common and sometimes require surgery. Other lower extremity injuries include fractures and contusions.
- **Overuse Lower Extremity Injuries**– Shin splints, knee and ankle pain are some of the more common overuse injuries to young soccer players. Stress fractures occur when the bone fractures slightly from overuse.
- **Upper Extremity Injuries**– Wrist sprains, fractures and shoulder dislocations injuries to the upper extremities usually occur from falling on an outstretched arm or player-to-player contact.
- **Head, Neck, and Face Injuries**– These types of injuries can include cuts, bruises, fractures, sprains and concussions.

How Injuries Can Be Prevented

- Have a yearly physical and follow any recommendations your physician gives you
- Perform proper warm-up and cool-down exercises
- Use well-fitted cleats, shin guards, padding, helmets, and mouth guards
- Stay adequately hydrated
- Incorporate strength training and stretching into your warm-up as well as cool-down exercises
- Be aware of any poor field conditions such as divots in the grass/clay that might cause you to fall and sustain an injury
- Consult a sports medicine physician if you have any concerns or are experiencing any pain
- Have fun and be safe!



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