

football injury prevention

Many football injuries can be prevented by increasing the level of awareness and knowledge among players, parents and coaches. Football, one of the most popular sports among male high school students in the United States, is a leading cause of sports-related injuries; with an injury rate almost twice that of basketball, the second most popular sport. Studies have shown that 15 to 20 percent of players age 8 to 14 are injured during the football season. For young children, injuries to the arms, hands and shoulders are most common. Older players most often injure the lower extremities. The most prevalent injuries are general sprains/strains to the knees and ankles, followed by ACL injuries to the knee. The importance of good flexibility and strengthening programs for the young athlete are often underestimated. Research has shown that such programs may reduce injuries by as much as 50 percent.

common football injuries

- Ankle and knee sprains/strains (ACL injuries)
- Avulsions, fractures and growth plate injuries of arms and legs
- Patellar (kneecap) dislocations/subluxations
- Contusions/compartment injuries
- Shoulder subluxations and traumatic injuries to surrounding ligaments and musculature
- Traction injuries to nerves in arms, legs and neck
- Head and eye injuries
- Cuts and scrapes
- Overuse injuries of legs
- Heat-related illnesses/dehydration

preventing football injuries

- Establish a good stretching program to include hip flexors (front of hip), hip adductors (inside of leg), I-T band (outside of leg), quadriceps (front of thighs), hamstrings (back of thighs), gastrocnemius/soleus (calves), back/trunk, shoulder girdle and neck.
- Establish a good strengthening program to include hip flexors, hip adductors, hip abductors, quadriceps, hamstrings, gastrocnemius/soleus, back/trunk, shoulder girdle and neck.
- Establish activities that promote balance reactions and proprioception (body awareness).
- Establish a plyometric/agility program.
- Wear supportive shoes appropriate for football.
- Tape or brace joints if they are unstable or have a history of repetitive injuries.
- Be proactive in learning the correct techniques both on the field and in the weight room.
- Hydrate 30 minutes prior to practice/game; drink a combination of water/sports drinks during practice/game. Sports drinks are only recommended if practice is greater than one and a half hours.
- Utilize cool clothing and take breaks as needed to prevent heat-related illnesses.

preseason football conditioning

It is recommended to have a preseason, progressive conditioning program in place for young athletes to prepare their bodies for the sport. It is beneficial to start the program at least two to four weeks prior to beginning the season to address flexibility, strength, balance/coordination, endurance, agility and football techniques.

pre-game warm-up guidelines

It is recommended to have a pre-game warm-up in place for young athletes to prepare their bodies for the demands of powerful bursts of repetitive movements. A comprehensive warm-up will take approximately 30 minutes.

- Start with five minutes of light aerobic activity, including jogging, linear drills (non-cutting), etc., to gradually raise the heart rate and warm-up muscles allowing for better blood flow during stretches.
- Spend at least 15 minutes stretching hip flexors, hip adductors, I-T band, quadriceps, hamstrings, gastrocnemius/soleus, back/trunk and neck.
- Spend five minutes on football-specific drills, including full running and multi-directional skills (i.e. cutting, crossovers and play simulation).
- Finish with high-intensity, multi-directional sprinting activities, including contact drills for five minutes.



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