

Soccer injury prevention

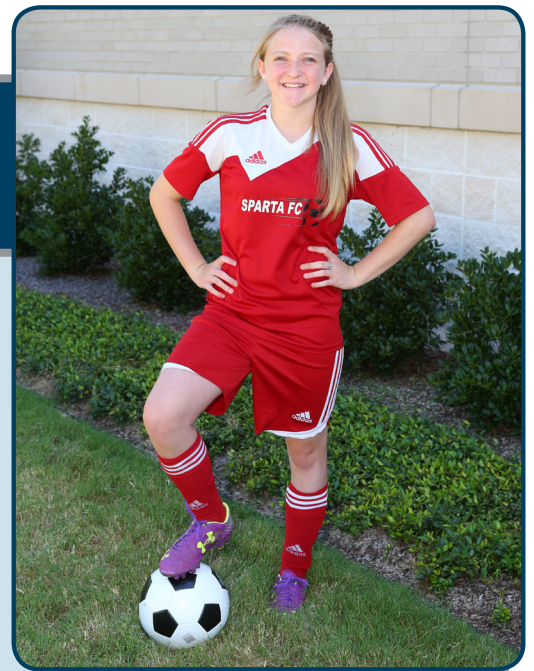
Nearly 40% of soccer players ages 5 to 14 years will get injured. Knee and ankle injuries are the most common. Girls are more likely to have leg injuries to than boys. Many soccer injuries can be prevented.

What are common soccer injuries?

- Ankle and knee pain
- Growth plate fractures in legs
- Bruises
- Severe lower leg swelling
- Head and eye injuries
- Heat illnesses

How can I prevent soccer injuries?

- Have a good, total-body warm-up program. It will prepare your body for soccer. Warm-ups should use moving stretches (dynamic stretches) and include arm, leg and back muscles.
- Have a good strengthening program for upper and lower body muscles. Good form in strength training will help prevent overuse injuries.
- Perform drills that challenge your balance and body control.
- Include jumping and agility drills. These work on burst-like movements (plyometrics).
- Wear properly fitted safety gear. This includes:
 - Soccer-specific shoes
 - Shin guards and other protective equipment
 - A mouthguard
 - Safety glasses or glass guards, if needed
- Drink plenty of water 30 minutes before games or practices. Drink both water and sports drinks during games and practices. Only drink sports drinks if practice or games last more than 90 minutes.



What should I do before the season starts?

Soccer athletes need a pre-season plan to help get their bodies ready for play. Start the program at least 6-8 weeks before the season starts. Pre-season plans include:

- Flexibility
- Strength
- Balance and coordination
- Endurance
- Agility
- Special soccer skills

How should I warm up?

It is important to warm up. This helps the body get ready to handle the bursts of energy the sport needs. A basic warm-up should take 15 to 25 minutes.

- Start with 5 minutes of light aerobic activity. This helps raise the heart rate and warms up muscles.
- Do 10 minutes of dynamic stretches. Stretch your arms, legs and back.
- Finish with 5 minutes of full-speed sprinting and jumping in different directions.
- At the end of practice:
 - Spend time stretching your whole body.
 - Hold each stretch for at least 30 seconds.
 - Stretch for 10 to 15 minutes.

This handout is for information purposes only. It does not replace medical advice from a qualified doctor or physical therapist. Cook Children's Medical Center will not be responsible for any harm or injury resulting from interpretation of the materials.