

# The Wellness Family

Dr. Cuperus Keeps You Informed

## Sports Related Injuries

Almost 75% of families with children between the ages of 5 and 18 have at least one child who plays organized sports, either at school or on a community team. This may seem like a good thing; there's the benefit of learning to work together as a team, building camaraderie and the physical activity.

However parents need to pay special attention to the potential injuries that may occur with their child and proactively have their Family Wellness Chiropractor as a part of their child's healthcare team.

### **What Parents Need to Know**

It is estimated that 3.5 million children under the age of 14 receive medical treatment for sports injuries each year. It is estimated that almost one-third of all injuries incurred during childhood are related to sports activities with the most common injuries being strains and sprains. The estimated number of children injured each year is as follows:

- Football 350,000+
- Basketball 300,000+
- Soccer 140,000+
- Baseball 120,000+

These numbers may not be surprising, but it's been proven that even non-contact sports result in injuries:

- Swimming 43,000+
- Wrestling 33,500+
- Gymnastics 26,500+
- Hockey 21,000+
- Track and Field 17,000+

The health care costs for treating school injuries are estimated to be between 3 and 4 billion a year and the impact of childhood sports injuries on the number of school days missed can be significant. The Institute for Preventative Sports Medicine estimates that there are almost 212 million school days missed by students due to musculoskeletal injuries, and the vast majority of those are due to sports related injuries.

### **Concussions – the Silent Injury**

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 300,000 children and adolescents suffer from sports related concussions each year. Many of these children will recover within just a few weeks, but research is proving that this "silent injury" can have long lasting effects that are easy to miss.

Symptoms such as memory problems, chronic headaches, difficulty concentrating and even depression can be the result for months and even years after a serious concussion. Many doctors and parents have noticed abrupt personality changes following a serious sports-related head injury.

Worse yet are the young athletes who get up, "shake it off", and continue playing after an impact on the field. Warning signs are silenced by adrenaline or endorphins and, since only about 5% of injuries that cause a concussion will actually "knock out" the athlete, they don't realize that they've been seriously injured.

While rare, a lack of education about the dangers of brain injuries has even resulted in death. And do not be deceived, football is not the only sport that results in concussions: basketball and soccer players are equally susceptible to this dangerous brain injury.



*"It is estimated that one-third of all injuries incurred during childhood are sports related."*

### **Preventing Repetitive Stress Syndrome**

Sports that require a child or teen to move one arm or leg repetitively over long periods of time can actually cause repetitive-stress to their still developing spine. The body was designed to move asymmetrically. When we walk we tend to swing both arms rhythmically as our legs move in counter-motion to our arms. This develops muscle tone evenly and proper spinal alignment.

When a sport requires a child to use their right or left dominant arm or leg repeatedly and frequently, they are not allowing for symmetry in their body movements.

If your child participates in sports, encourage them to use both arms or both legs equally. This will help their

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motions to be symmetrical and may help to avoid repetitive-stress syndrome on their spine.

### ***Listen to the Pain Signals***

Athletes, whether professional or in grade school, place a tremendous amount of stress on their bodies. The running, jumping, tackling and falling of most competitive sports tend to result in sprains, strains and chronic injuries. These injuries result in pain that will sideline an athlete, typically for only days, but sometimes for months.

Pain is an important warning signal from the body that something is wrong. An athlete on prescription or over-the-counter pain-relievers won't receive that warning signal and will tend to overextend themselves resulting in a worsening of the underlying problem. This is why forward thinking coaches, athletes and doctors have come to realize that pain-killers are not the answer.

While pain-killers merely cover up the pain (the symptom of the problem) and deceive the athlete into believing that they can do more than they actually should, Chiropractic approaches health from a wellness perspective: get to the root of the problem and the symptoms will be taken care of as well.

### ***The Chiropractic Factor***

Probably more than any other profession, the chiropractic approach to health and wellness most closely relates to the needs of the sports participant. Most sporting activities involve body contact, fast starts and stops, as well as a particular positioning of the body that places an unusual amount of strain on the back, the core muscles and the structural system. When the athlete's body is performing at peak efficiency they will perform the same.

## **Top Ten Tips to Care for Your Athlete**

10 – Always warm up – increasing the blood flow to the joints, muscles and ligaments helps to avoid muscle injury

9 – Avoid “heading the ball” in soccer as this causes undue strain on the neck and shoulder muscles while increasing the risk of brain injury

8 – Land on bent knees when jumping, or risk tearing the ligament that joins the thighbone to the shinbone

7 – When playing baseball or softball use non-stationary bases so that children sliding feet or face first into the bases will avoid serious injury

6 – Be sure to give your children a healthy meal prior to exertion

5 – Teach your children to listen to their body's warning signals and never play through the pain

4 – Always wear proper gear from helmets to cleats and everything in between

3 – Make sure that practice time is reasonable and avoid practicing or playing to excess as the body is meant to work for a certain span of time, and then rest for an equal span of time

2 – While wearing the right thing is important, not wearing the wrong thing is equally important – jewelry can get snagged on other players or their clothing causing painful injury

1 – Family Wellness Chiropractors play an important role in helping athletes operate at optimum efficiency and play their best

*Dear Patient,*

*Dr. Cuperus is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family's sports participation.*

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