

Kids and Soccer: Injuries Do Happen



According to recent studies, almost 14 million children are involved in organized youth soccer. Like any team sport, playing soccer can bolster teamwork skills, physical fitness and self-esteem. And when compared with sports like hockey or football, **soccer is relatively safe**. However, injuries do occur while playing soccer, and physical therapy may be essential to getting your child back on the field. The *American Journal of Sports Medicine* reports that nearly 1.6 million children in the United States made trips to emergency rooms due to soccer-related injuries over a 13-year period. While injuries do not outweigh the enjoyment and benefits of playing, parents should be aware of **potential dangers** and act accordingly. This soccer season, whether your

child plays in a peewee league or for a varsity-level team, remember the following:

- Bruises are the most common soccer injury, followed by overuse injuries and fractures. To prevent overuse injuries, **avoid over-training** or allowing children to “play through the pain.” Children’s developing bodies need time to heal, and pain is an important message that something is wrong.
- Although the subject of soccer-related concussions or head injuries appears frequently in the news, such injuries are actually quite uncommon, and are usually due to one player accidentally or purposely “heading” another. Experts may disagree over whether young children should ever “head” the ball; however, **head injuries usually involve another player, not the ball itself**. If your child sustains a head injury while playing and loses consciousness, seems confused, is dizzy, vomiting or complaining of pain, seek medical attention immediately.
- **Good flexibility and warm-up** are key to preventing most injuries. Make sure your child has warmed up and stretched properly before and after playing.
- Because children grow at different rates, it’s important to ensure that they are playing with **children their own size and skill level**.
- Children who have suffered past injuries or have a predisposition to certain conditions should wear **proper supportive braces or protective gear**. If the child sustains an injury, be sure that the injury is completely and properly healed and rehabilitated before the child resumes play.

Remember to keep children well hydrated at all times. Most of all, relax and have fun! With the right precautions, soccer can be a safe and enjoyable sport.