

REDUCING INJURY RISK IN BOYS AND GIRLS SOCCER

It is finally April. The winter weather has begun to turn and the time change has now come and gone. Days are now warmer and longer, and it's time to begin enjoying the great outdoors once again. And even though some have been practicing outdoor sports for months in literally frigid conditions in preparation for this time, many more are just now getting out and getting active in one of the most popular sports in the country: soccer.

Whether you are 6 or 65, soccer is truly one of the most popular sports in the U.S. In fact, according to the 2013-2014 High School Athletics Participation Study, almost 800,000 high school athletes participated in soccer across the country last season. Likewise, according to Nielsen ratings company, a combined 32 million people watched ESPN's coverage of the 2014 World Cup match between USA and Portugal. And, although those who watched the World Cup in 2014 probably weren't at risk for any serious soccer-related injuries, millions of individuals, who participate in high school and club soccer teams on a year-round basis, are. Sprained ankles, torn ACL's, broken bones, and concussions are quite common on the soccer fields today. Likewise, with competitive seasons, summer seasons, and indoor seasons running back to back; these injuries tend to stack up year round.



So whether your season is in April, in the summer months to come, or maybe even later in the year, take the time to review and apply the injury prevention information listed in this edition of our newsletter. These simple steps can reduce your likelihood for sustaining an injury in competitive soccer.

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What's Most Common....

The following data is retrieved from the most recent data of the 2012-2013 High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study.

Boys:

Average rate for injury:

Practice: .78 per 1000 Games: 3.28 per 1000

Most common site of injury overall:

Head/Face:	30.3%
Hip/Thigh/Upper Leg:	16.7%
Knee:	14.5%

For Games:

- *70% of all injuries occur during the 2nd half
- *34.6% of all injuries occur between the top of the goal box and the center line (offense)

For Practices:

- *65.1% of all injuries occur 1-2 hours into practice

Girls:

Average rate for injury:

Practice: .92 per 1000 Games: 5.54 per 1000

Most common site of injury overall:

Head/Face:	33.4%
Knee:	17.5%
Hip/Thigh/Upper Leg:	16.0%

For Games:

- 64% of all injuries occur during the 2nd half
- 41.9% of all injuries occur between the top of the goal box and the center line (offense)

For Practices:

- 57.5% of all injuries occur 1-2 hours into practice

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For the Girls...**#1. Improved Cardiorespiratory Fitness**

It is often assumed with running so prevalent in soccer that most athletes are in fairly good condition. However, as 64% of all game injuries occur in the 2nd half and 57.5% of all practice injuries occur between 1-2 hours into practice, the research tends to show us that our athletes are injured during the time when they are most likely fatigued as well.

#2. For Contact and Collision, Lead with the Body

The most common site of injury for girls' soccer is to the head and face (33.4%). Always protect the head from collision and impact, by leading with the body first.

#3. Protect the Knees*Point #1:*

45% of all game injuries occur to the midfielder and more than 60% of all injuries occur between the goal boxes. So, in the cutting and twisting that comes in the midfield, make certain you are moving and cutting on your toes and that you likewise keep your knees in tight by not overreaching for a contested ball.

Point #2:

17.5% of all soccer injuries are to the knees. Strongly consider implementing the injury prevention measures outlined in our September 2009 Newsletter on the ACL and how to protect your knees. It will show you how to focus your training efforts on

1. Proper Landing Mechanics
2. Appropriate Strength and Conditioning
3. Good Balance and Stability
4. Practiced Agility and Plyometrics

which can reduce your risk for sustaining a knee injury.

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For the Boys...**#1. Start first with the previous #1 and #2 recommendations given to the girls***Cardio:*

70% of all game injuries occur in the 2nd half and 65.1% of all practice injuries occur 1-2 hours into practice.

Lead with the body:

30.3% of all injuries in boys' soccer are to head and face. Likewise, boys have a 3x greater risk for sustaining a fracture during a game compared to girls. Lead with the body instead of leading with the head or the legs.

#2. Strengthen and Stretch the Hips

16.7% of all game injuries and 28.1% of all practice injuries for boys are to the hip, thigh, and upper leg. As most have either seen or experienced, groin, quad, and hamstring tightness and injury are very common in boys soccer. Appropriate strengthening and stretching for these areas can greatly reduce the likelihood of sustaining injury.

#3. Technique

As previously mentioned, boys have a 3x greater risk of sustaining a fracture during a game compared to girls. Therefore, intensity and technique go hand in hand in preventing injury. Realize that going half-speed with poor technique is almost always a recipe for injury: especially when going for a 50/50 ball. Keeping your legs under you and protecting your head during a contested ball can greatly reduce your overall likelihood for injury. Also, learn how to rest during the game. There is no standing still in soccer but learning how to outthink your opponent can not only keep you playing but can also keep you winning.



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