

SPORTS RELATED INJURIES ARE ON THE RISE

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics there is an increasing number of sports related injuries in children and teens. Injuries now top 3.5 million per year in children under the age of 15.

Prevention of injury is the first step for any child involved in sports. Parents can take an active role by having their children play in organized sports with adult supervision. The selected sports should be appropriate for the child's age, maturity and skill level. Appropriate protective gear will need to be worn. Parents should make sure that the equipment is in good working order and that there is a good fit (this includes the footwear). With any new sport it is important to start off slowly and gradually increase the amount of activity. All practices and games should include a warm-up and cool-down period. Warming up before exercise allows the joints to become more flexible and prevents injuries. Staying well hydrated is necessary in all sports activities. The parent should make sure their child has a water bottle or access to water for all games and practices.

There are many different types of sports related injuries. The most common injuries include sprains and strains. Sprains are tears of ligaments whereas strains are injuries to muscles and/or tendons. Repetitive stress injuries such as tendinitis and stress fractures occur with repetitive motions such as throwing. Repetitive stress injuries are also seen in sports that are played year round. Injuries that are unique to children include growth plate injuries. The growth plate is the region in the long bones of children where the development of new bone occurs.

Once an injury does occur it is important to obtain appropriate treatment. One basic principle applied to most sports injuries is the RICE principle. Where R = rest, I = ice, C = compression (ace wrap), and E = elevate. The child may need rehabilitation, the process of gradually increasing the amount of sport specific exercises and stretching. It is important to allow an injured child to fully recover. All too often the child is pushed back into playing too early. This will set them up for re-injury. When an injury does not improve, it becomes necessary to seek the help of a medical specialist such as an orthopedic doctor.

This article was written by Dr. Christopher Berman. Orthopedic Associates of Frederick has been providing the greater Frederick region with the best orthopedic care since 1977.