



Sport Safety

The presentation of children with sporting injuries to the Princess Margaret Hospital Emergency Department (PMH ED) has continued to rise over the last five years, with an average of 4,300 individual cases attending each year.

Older children aged between 10 and 14 years are at greater risk of sustaining a sporting injury. This is possibly due to a decrease in rule modification as children get older and a higher number of older children participating in competitive sports in comparison to younger children. Males account for two-thirds of sporting injury presentations to the PMH ED.

Sport and physical activity are a vital part of childhood development, allowing children to improve physical, cognitive and social skills with others. Injury risks however, are often perceived as a barrier to participation.



Australian Rules Football is the most commonly recorded activity associated with sporting injuries, accounting for 12 percent of sporting presentations to the PMH ED. This is followed by soccer, basketball, netball and rugby.

Common injury presentations include fractures, sprains and strains, bruising, cuts, dislocations and internal injuries. These are most commonly sustained to the upper and lower limbs as well as the facial, head and neck/torso areas.

Sporting injuries most commonly occur in the cooler winter months of May and June. This coincides with the winter organised sporting season. At this time many children are developing new or refreshing old skills. Not surprisingly, injuries most commonly occur over the weekend on Saturday and Sunday.



Treating Sports Injuries

Early treatment of injuries can often reduce the severity of the injury and prevent any further damage:

- All parents, sporting officials and coaches should learn basic first aid and resuscitation techniques
- Have a fully equipped first aid kit at the sporting club, in your home and in the car
- Place emergency contact numbers near every phone
- Give children basic education on injury treatment and management
- Prohibit injured players from returning to the sport without the consent of their doctor - continuing play may cause further damage
- If in doubt - DO NOT PLAY

If a child receives a sporting injury, the following injury management approaches should be used:

- **DRABCD** (Danger, Response, Airway, Breathing, Compression and Defibrillation)

For sprain and strain injuries apply:

- **RICER** (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation, Referral)
- **NO HARM** (NO Heat, Alcohol, Running or Massage)

For more information on treating sporting injuries visit:

www.sma.org.au



How to stay active and safe

It is important that parents, carers, coaches and participants are aware of common sporting injuries and the ways in which they can be prevented. To minimise the risk of sporting injuries, the following preventative measures can be followed:

- Ensure your child wears the appropriate protective equipment for their chosen sport. This may include mouthguards, eyewear, helmets, protective padding, footwear and gloves
- Stay well hydrated while participating in sporting activities, particularly during warmer months
- Provide adequate shade and sunscreen to participants and encourage the use of appropriate clothing and hats
- Always warm up and cool down before and after exercise
- Young children should participate in sports that have modified rules and equipment appropriate to their development. Coaches need to ensure modifications are adhered to. Modified sports include AusKick, Minkey, NetSetGo, Kanga Cricket, Modcross and many others
- Children should participate in training sessions to learn and develop new skills before participating in competitive games
- Training should gradually prepare athletes for competition and include a warm up, skills practice, game like situations and a cool down
- Do not play sport while tired, ill or injured. Ensure that appropriate recovery time is allocated
- Improved fitness and skill level will reduce your chance of injury



- Sporting grounds and facilities should be checked regularly by the appropriate person. Damaged playing surfaces, fencing, lights, posts, padding and rubbish should all be reported
- Ensure your coach or manager is aware of any existing medical conditions that may affect your child during sporting activities. This should be done prior to the start of the season and regularly throughout the season to keep key personnel updated
- Ensure your team is entered in the right level of competition appropriate to the children's age, size and skill level
- A trained and well equipped first aid officer should be present at all games and during competitions
- Schools should outline suitable rules and guidelines for children playing sport at recess and lunch
- If an injury does occur seek immediate medical attention

References:

Sports Medicine Australia (n.d.). Safety Guidelines for Children and Young People in Sport and Recreation. Retrieved March 2014 from: <http://sma.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/2009/05/childsafetymguidelines-fulldoc.pdf>

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