

Sprains, Strains and Other Mysterious Pains: Taking Care of Your Athlete

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Is it safe to "push" a kid when they start to complain that they are hurting. Children differ significantly in their ability to communicate what's going on with their body. They may have uncertainty if they should bring up a problem/ pain/ ouch-y. Your primary goal is to keep them involved and allow them to enjoy their sports activity.

With low or absent physical activity during the summer, muscle tissue becomes atrophic, and bone mineral content decreases. An increase in physical activity stimulates musculoskeletal growth and repetitive stress can stimulate positive adaptive responses in musculoskeletal structures. However, excessive stress or overload can lead to tissue breakdown and injury. They all will get sore muscles and bumps and bruises, but can we minimize the risk of injury? Stretching outside of sports activity and rest is of utmost importance.

Certain aspects of the growing athlete may predispose the child and adolescent to repetitive stress injuries such as traction apophysitis (Osgood-Schlatter disease, Severs disease, medial epicondylitis [Little League elbow]), injuries to developing joint surfaces (osteochondritis dissecans), and/or injuries to the immature spine (spondylolysis, spondylolisthesis, vertebral apophysitis).⁹

Injuries to epiphyseal growth centers (growth plates) are a particular concern for young athletes. Because the physéal plate may be weaker than surrounding ligament structures, external stress may disrupt a growth plate rather than damaging a ligament or related soft-tissue structure. Fortunately, there is no evidence that epiphyseal fractures or growth complications caused by epiphyseal injuries are seen disproportionately in children who participate in organized sports or higher levels of competition.

What to do if they say they are hurt or hurting:

Stop or Step Out of the Play for a Few Minutes, Stretch and see if the pain will lessen; get back in Ice if necessary - showing signs of immediate swelling

Advise the Coach/Talk to a parent

Recommend ice 2-3 times day for the first 48-72 hours; NOT HEAT

Continue stretching on off days, especially when they have recently gone through a growth spurt

Don't just let them skip practice; try to get them to do light activity

If they are not showing improvement within 3 days, may need to refer to a specialist

Do they need to be in the Emergency Room? Sometimes your child gets home and then realizes they are hurting or wakes up the next morning to find his arm or leg hurts. As parents we want to help them as quickly as possible, but sprains and strains are best managed in a doctor's office - orthopedists or even a pediatric orthopedist.

If you need help deciding if this injury can be managed on your own or if you need to see a doctor, please utilize us as a resource.

Thanks and have a great season and a healthy school year.

