

Sport Injury in children

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It makes parents' hearts pound, panic and fear shooting through their minds. One moment, a fun game is under way – in a blink of an eye, a sports injury has one of their children lying on the ground hurt. What happened? Can she walk? Is he bleeding?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), scenarios like this are not rare:

Nationally, over 775,000 children under age 15 are treated in hospital emergency departments for sports-related injuries each year.

About 80 percent of these injuries are from football, basketball, baseball, or soccer.

Most sports-related injuries in children – about two-thirds of them – are sprains and strains. Only 5 percent of sports injuries involve broken bones.

Long after the panic and the immediate trauma treatment of a sports injury, however, there are problems lurking – problems that may not appear until much later. The most serious of these is osteoarthritis. According to one study, a single knee injury early in life can put a person at five times the risk for osteoarthritis in adulthood; likewise a hip injury could more than triple risk.

Fact: Osteoarthritis (OA) affects approximately 21 million of the nearly 70 million people with arthritis. Already the nation's number one cause of disability, all types of arthritis affect one in three people, a number that is expected to grow annually as baby boomers age. In OA the cartilage that cushions a joint is worn away, causing the joint's bones to meet and grind together, resulting in pain and stiffness.

And it's not just an old person's disease – younger people who've been injured in high intensity sports, such as skiing, can begin experiencing symptoms in their late 30s and early 40s.

Kids who play sports will get hurt – that's a fact. But how can parents and coaches protect kids' joints, reducing the risk of injury and cutting the chance of developing osteoarthritis later?

Finally: Don't Panic!

Protecting your child's joints from sports injuries should not mean keeping him or her out of sports and stuck in the house. The long-term benefits of sports for children are clear. Exercise is crucial for maintaining proper weight, improving strength and coordination, and building lifelong good health habits early. Emotionally, team sports can help children build social skills and can provide a general sense of well-being.

Let them play – but play smart!