

Bone & Joint News for Coaches

TRI RIVERS SURGICAL
ASSOCIATES, INC.

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Twist and Shout



Ankle Sprains Are a Common Sports Injury

Chances are you've experienced it before — that sudden awkward moment when you lose your balance, stumble clumsily and sprain your ankle. Or worse, maybe you're a coach who has watched one of his or her players go down. Moments like this happen to 27,000 Americans each day, making ankle sprains a top orthopedic complaint and the most common sports injury.

"A sprain results when the ankle turns sharply inward or outward, causing one or more of the elastic ligaments that connect the bones to stretch or tear. Planting your foot incorrectly while taking a step or playing a sport may cause a sprain," said Thomas S. Muzzonigro, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon with Tri Rivers Surgical Associates.

If you suspect a sprain in one of your athletes, it is best to pull him or her from the game promptly and seek evaluation from a physician. If a sprain is not treated properly, especially in children, long-term problems could result, including repetitive sprains, which may require surgical repair of the ligaments. Early evaluation can also rule out an injury to a growth plate, which is the growing tissue at the end of bones in children.

"Most ankle sprains are treated conservatively. Your doctor may prescribe rest; anti-inflammatory medication; and the use of an ice pack, brace, bandage or crutches. Depending on the severity of the sprain, healing time may vary from a few weeks to several months," said Dr. Muzzonigro, who is also a team physician for the Pine-Richland Rams and the Mars Planets.

After an initial period of resting the joint to reduce swelling and heal the ligaments, it is important to gradually resume weight bearing on the ankle, said Dr. Muzzonigro. Physical therapy or an at-home exercise program may also be prescribed to help restore the ankle's strength, flexibility and range of motion. Once the joint is strong enough, the athlete can slowly resume activities as allowed by his or her physician.

When to See the Doctor

Moderate to serious injuries require medical care to promote proper healing and to prevent long-term damage to your athlete's growing body. You should seek immediate medical attention for your young athlete if:

- The injury has caused swelling, instability, deformity or another obvious change in the appearance of the bone or joint. This could signal a fracture or dislocation.
- The pain and swelling do not improve within 24 to 48 hours. An injury that causes prolonged pain, swelling or inability to use the affected area should always be treated by a physician.
- Your athlete experiences recurring pain or sustains frequent injuries in the same area. These are symptoms of an injury caused by repetitive stress, such as Little League elbow or patellar tendonitis.
- Your athlete limps, winces or favors one limb over the other. In their enthusiasm, many young athletes will downplay injuries. By observing your player's body language, you can often tell if he or she is hurting.



Tri Rivers
SURGICAL ASSOCIATES, INC.
Sports Medicine

Ask the Doctor



What is Osgood-Schlatter?

Osgood-Schlatter disease isn't a disease at all. It is, however, a painful knee condition, typically found in adolescents ages 10 to 15. It can also affect younger children.

"Osgood-Schlatter is an orthopedic condition often seen in young athletes who are experiencing a growth spurt and participate in sports that involve a lot of running, jumping or squatting," said Robert L. Waltrip, M.D., orthopedic surgeon with Tri Rivers Surgical Associates. "Pain and swelling are generally felt a few inches below

the kneecap, and some athletes may even develop a calcium formation in the kneecap tendon."

After conducting a physical examination to diagnosis Osgood-Schlatter, your doctor will recommend treatment options, which may include age- and weight-appropriate anti-inflammatory medications, rest and wrapping the knee. It is important to rest the knee until the pain subsides, which can take days, weeks or months, depending on the severity of the case.

"While there is no cure for this condition, most children will feel relief after their growth spurt is over. In rare cases, symptoms can recur over several years, but with rest and time, most children will resume play pain-free," explained Dr. Waltrip, who is also a team physician for the Pine-Richland Rams and the Mars Planets.

Do you have a question about sports injuries in young athletes? Submit them to mail@tririversortho.com, and look for the answer in upcoming issues.



Calling All Coaches



Nominate Your MVP

Do you know an all-star player, team or coach who has recently bounced back from a sports injury? Send us an e-mail to mail@tririversortho.com, and let us know why you think your nominee is an MVP. Don't forget to include a photo. Your all-star may appear in an upcoming issue.

Did You Know...

- The human body is made up of more than 70 percent water? Water aids in all aspects of healthy body function. Reducing the body's water by as little as 5 percent can reduce an athlete's physical performance and energy level by 20 percent to 30 percent. Children 12 years old or older need eight glasses of water daily. More water is needed with increased activity level and in hotter temperatures. Remember to keep your team well-hydrated before, during and after games and practice.
- Stretching improves flexibility in the joints, muscles and nerves? It also increases blood flow to the muscles. It's a good idea to stretch before and after activity. Stretching after play reduces lactic acid, which decreases soreness and allows the muscles to relax again. When leading your team in stretches, be sure to stretch both sides of the body (for example, hamstrings and quadriceps); avoid overstretching, jerking and bouncing; stretch slowly; and don't forget to breathe.
- Heat and ice can both be effective in treating injuries? For a traumatic injury like an ankle sprain, it is best to use ice on and off for 24 to 48 hours. For injuries caused by overwork, such as a sore back, heat should be applied for as long as is comfortable without causing pain or burning. Ice may also be helpful for some overuse injuries that become inflamed after working out.

R.I.C.E. A First-Aid Staple



On the field or in the backyard, the best first-aid treatment for minor sprains and strains is R.I.C.E.:

Rest the affected area for several days, bearing little to no weight on it.

Ice the injury periodically for 24 to 48 hours.

Compress the injury by wrapping it firmly in a bandage.

Elevate the swollen joint above heart level to help reduce swelling and promote healing.



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