

Bone & Joint News for Coaches

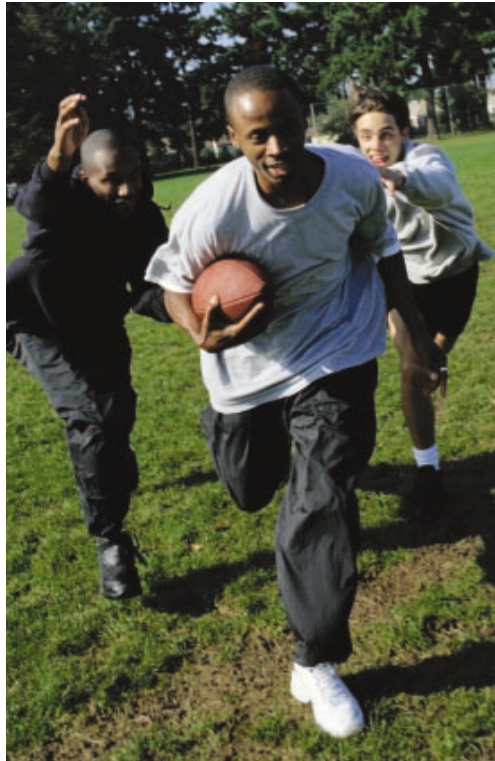
TRI RIVERS SURGICAL
ASSOCIATES, INC.

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Fielding Fractures



When kids are playing sports, there's always an increased risk for injury, including broken bones. While a fracture is the last thing you want to see as a coach or parent, knowing what to do if one occurs will put you ahead of the game.

"A fracture, or broken bone, can range in severity from a small crack or a clean break to a completely shattered bone," said S. Joshua Szabo, M.D., a sports medicine specialist with Tri Rivers Surgical Associates and team physician for the Pine-Richland Rams and the Mars Planets.

Closed, or simple, fractures occur when the bone is broken, but the skin is not lacerated. Open, or compound, fractures occur when the broken bone either pierces or breaks the skin when fractured.

When a bone breaks, many athletes experience pain, making it difficult to move the affected body part. If a fracture is less severe, a person may not experience any pain. Because breaking a bone is a shock to the entire body, your player may also feel dizzy and experience chills or vomiting.

Symptoms of a broken bone may include a visibly misshapen or out-of-place bone; swelling, bruising or a feeling of "pins and needles"; or pain when bearing weight or attempting to move the affected area.

"Any fracture or suspected break should be evaluated by a physician to ensure proper treatment and prevent complications," said Dr. Szabo. "This is especially important when chil-

dren are injured, as improper healing can lead to severe growth plate damage."

If you suspect a broken bone, move the affected limb as little as possible to prevent further damage. Apply a sling or splint, if available. A physician will examine and X-ray the broken bone to make a diagnosis. "Casts and splints are a more common form of treatment for a broken bone, but surgery is sometimes necessary in severe cases," said Dr. Szabo.

A fracture can sideline a young athlete for several weeks or months, depending on the extent of the injury and how closely the treatment plan is followed. "Fortunately bones are natural healers and often heal faster in healthy, active children," said Dr. Szabo. "Allow time for rest and recovery and seek a doctor's advice as to when your athlete can gradually return to play."



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Sports Medicine

How to Apply a Splint

Temporarily splinting a bone or joint injury can prevent further damage until your athlete is seen by a doctor. Follow these steps to properly apply a splint:

- Keep the injured limb in the position you find it.
- Place soft padding around the bone. (Use a rolled up towel or shirt).
- Place something firm next to the bone. A rolled-up newspaper or a board will work. Make sure it is long enough to go past the joints and above and below the injured area.
- Keep the splint in place with first-aid tape.

Keep Your Head in the Game



Although typically associated with contact sports, concussions can occur during other sports as well.

"A concussion is a jarring or shaking injury to the head that may disturb brain function," said Thomas S. Muzzonigro, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon with Tri Rivers Surgical Associates and team physician for the Pine-Richland Rams and the Mars Planets.

Symptoms of a concussion may include headache, nausea, irritability, trouble sleeping, trouble concentrating, vision impairment, poor muscle coordination and memory loss.

"It is important to remember that symptoms of a concussion may be delayed, making it possible for the onset of the concussion to have occurred prior to the game or practice," said Dr. Muzzonigro.

According to Dr. Muzzonigro, there is a common misconception that a player with a concussion will lose consciousness. But that is not always the case. Concussions are classified by three different stages with varying symptoms:

- **Grade 1: Mild** — Athlete is mildly dizzy and confused, symptoms resolve completely within 15 minutes
- **Grade 2: Moderate** — Athlete is fairly dazed and may experience a headache and/or some memory loss

• **Grade 3: Severe** — Athlete has been knocked unconscious for any period of time, symptoms persist beyond 30 minutes

"Even a mild concussion should be evaluated by a physician to avoid any further trauma," Dr. Muzzonigro said. "Closely monitor your athlete for the next 24 hours. An age- and weight-appropriate over the counter acetaminophen or ibuprofen may be used for pain relief."

If your player has a concussion, it is important to check for any head injuries, such as lacerations or contusions, and have them treated as well. If you suspect a severe concussion, keep your athlete's head or neck stable until medical help arrives, said Dr. Muzzonigro.

Athletes who experience a concussion should not return to play for at least a week. "If a player experiences two or more Grade 2 concussions within a season, he or she should sit out for the remainder of the season," said Dr. Muzzonigro.

Ask the Doctor

Is It Safe for Children or Preteens to Lift Weights?

"Until a child reaches puberty, weight training is relatively ineffective and potentially harmful if not done correctly," said Robert L. Waltrip, M.D., a sports medicine specialist with Tri Rivers Surgical Associates and team physician for the Pine-Richland Rams and the Mars Planets.

According to Dr. Waltrip, a young athlete should visit his or her doctor for a physical examination before beginning to lift weights. Once the doctor gives his or her approval for the player to strength train, you'll want to make sure that proper supervision is provided, using safe equipment and following an age-appropriate routine to help prevent injury.

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

Did You Know...

- The femur (thigh bone) is the longest bone in your body? It extends from your pelvis to your knee and is one of your strongest and heaviest bones.
- There is no such thing as being "double jointed?" It is more likely that flexible people who can put their legs behind their head either work at stretching and staying flexible and/or have more collagen tissue.
- The funny "bone" is actually a nerve? Called the ulnar nerve, it runs along the inside of your elbow. Bumping that nerve causes pain or a temporary tingling sensation.

★ 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.



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