

Most Common Soccer Injuries

Soccer is generally considered a safe physical activity with an injury rate one fifth to one half of that in American football. Unfortunately, injuries still do occur. The nature of the game, with quick starting and stopping and physical contact, leads to these injuries. The most common of these injuries can be placed in five categories: sprains, strains, fractures, head injuries and skin injuries.

Sprains: Injuries to the ankle and knee are clearly the most common in soccer with ankle sprains leading the way. This can involve one or more of the ligaments that support the ankle joint. Second most common sprains involve the knee ligaments specifically the medial collateral ligament (on the side of the knee closest to the other leg). The changing of direction and pivoting in soccer tend to cause these injuries. Proper warm up and stretching can help prevent some of these injuries. Uneven fields can also lead to injuries of these ligaments. Won't it be great when we get those new fields. Treatment includes RICE- Rest Ice Compression and Elevation. Medication may also need to be given in certain situations. Medical intervention may also include bracing, casting or occasionally surgery.

Strains: Muscle strains can be caused by pulling a muscle too far in a direction, contracting a muscle hard against resistance, or contracting a muscle hard when it is not ready. The muscles of the thigh (groin, hamstring and quadriceps) and calf are most often strained. Good flexibility will decrease your chance of getting a muscle strain. A mild warm up to get the blood flowing then stretching each muscle group before practice and after practice will improve flexibility and minimize injury. Proper fitting shoes with appropriate spikes for the conditions will also play a role in prevention of injuries. Treatment generally involves RICE (see above)

Fractures: Fractures generally involve lower leg, ankle and foot bones due to direct contact with other players. Wrist fractures from falls or rib fractures from direct contact with other players are also seen. Jaw fractures are rare but serious. (Ask Wizards defender Jimmy Conrad)

Head Injuries: Head injuries generally relate to concussions but also include dental and eye injuries. Concussions are very complex and actually deserve an entire column. (See next month). Generally they are caused by contact with another player or the goal post. Numerous studies have shown that heading the ball when done properly does not cause concussions. Again more details next month regarding cause, treatment and return to play from concussions.

Skin Injuries: Abrasions and cuts can occur in soccer matches and practice generally from contact with other players. Injuries range from the minor scrapes to the dramatic blood gushing scalp lacerations. Quick on field treatment is important to prevent scarring and infection. Coaches and parents should be equipped to handle these injuries.

This installment is meant to be basic and introductory. I hope to delve deeper into specific topics each month. Basic knowledge about these injuries and proper training of coaches regarding prevention and treatment will help make this a more enjoyable season. Keep on Kicking!

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