



Football Injuries

Football is one of the most popular sports played by young athletes. Every year almost a million athletes under the age of 18 are treated in emergency rooms, doctors' offices and clinics for football-related injuries.

What types of injuries are most common in football?

1. Traumatic Injuries

- Knee injuries can adversely affect a player's long-term involvement in the sport
 - ▶ Anterior cruciate ligament (ACL)
 - ▶ Medial and lateral collateral ligaments
 - ▶ Menisci (cartilage of the knee)
- Ankle sprains due to the surfaces played on and cutting motions
- Shoulder and labrum injuries (cartilage bumper surrounding the socket part of the shoulder)
- Clavicle and acromioclavicular joint (ACJ)

2. Concussions

Football players are susceptible to concussions. A concussion is a change in brain function due to trauma. Not all players who suffer a concussion will lose consciousness. The athlete should be removed immediately from play and should return to play only when approved by a health care professional.

Signs of a concussion

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Loss of balance
- Drowsiness/fatigue
- Numbness/tingling
- Confusion/memory problems
- Blurry vision
- Light/noise sensitivity

3. Overuse Injuries

Back pain is a fairly common complaint in football players due to weight lifting and blocking. Athletes need to use caution with certain lifting exercises such as squat press, military press and bench press. Overuse can also lead to overtraining syndrome, when a player trains beyond the ability for the body to recover. Patellar tendinitis (knee pain) is also a common overuse problem that can be treated by strengthening the quadriceps.

4. Heat Injuries

Heat injuries are a major concern for youth football players, especially in August when some of the highest temperatures and humidity occur. Intense physical activity can cause excessive sweating that depletes the body of salt and water, causing painful cramping of major muscle groups. If not treated with body cooling and fluid replacement, this can progress into heat exhaustion and heat stroke – which can result in death.

How can heat illness be prevented?

- Check with the coaching staff and athletic trainers about temperature and humidity to determine timing or cancellation of practices
- Ask coaches about going from full equipment to shorts and shoulder pads in certain situations
- Wear light fabric clothing that allows for proper sweating and breathing of skin
- Practice early conditioning or acclimatization to allow athletes to get used to heat
- Monitor fluid loss by daily weights
- Monitor hydration status by following urine output and urine color
- Make sure athletes take frequent and scheduled water breaks
- Ensure athletes understand certain conditions can worsen heat illness
 - ▶ Upper respiratory infection
 - ▶ Vomiting or diarrhea
 - ▶ Certain medicines or supplements like cold medicines and Ephedra

How can football injuries be prevented?

- Have a pre-season health and wellness evaluation
- Perform proper warm-up and cool-down routines
- Incorporate strength training and stretching
- Hydrate to maintain health and minimize cramps
- Stay active during summer break to prepare for fall sports
- Wear properly fitted protective equipment – helmet, pads and mouth guard
- Tackle with the head up and do not lead with the helmet
- Play by the rules of the game
- Speak with a sports medicine professional or athletic trainer about injury concerns or prevention strategies

Need immediate treatment for a football injury?

The Children's HealthSM Andrews Institute for Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine offers treatment for all sport-related injuries. Call to book your appointment today. With same-day and next-day appointments, we can get you in and back in the game.

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