



# Soccer Injuries

Soccer is one of the most popular sports in the world and the fastest growing team sport in the U.S. It provides an enjoyable form of aerobic exercise and helps develop balance, agility, coordination and a sense of teamwork. But just as with every sport, soccer players must be aware of the risks for injury. Prevention, early detection and treatment can help you stay on the field long-term.

## **What are some common soccer injuries and their symptoms?**

Injuries to the lower extremities are the most common in soccer. These injuries can be traumatic or result from overuse of a muscle, tendon or bone.

### **Lower extremity injuries**

Sprains and strains are the most common lower-extremity injuries. Cartilage tears and anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) sprains in the knee are common injuries that may require surgery. Other injuries include fractures and contusions from direct blows to the body.

### **Overuse injuries**

Shin splints (soreness in the calf), patellar tendinitis (pain in the knee) and Achilles tendinitis (pain in the back of the ankle) are some of the more common soccer complaints. Soccer players are also prone to groin pulls, as well as thigh and calf muscle strains.

Stress fractures occur when the bone becomes weak from overuse. It is often difficult to distinguish a stress fractures from a soft tissue injury. If pain develops in any part of your lower extremity and does not clearly improve after a few days of rest, a physician should be consulted to determine whether a stress fracture is present.

### **Upper extremity injuries**

Wrist sprains, wrist fractures and shoulder dislocations usually occur from falling on an outstretched arm or from player-to-player contact.

## Head, neck and face injuries

Injuries to the head, neck and face include cuts, bruises, fractures and neck sprains, as well as concussions or an alteration of your mental state. Concussions should always be evaluated by a physician as they are extremely serious.

## How are soccer injuries treated?

Participation should be stopped immediately until an injury is evaluated and treated. Most injuries are minor and can be treated by a short period of rest, ice and elevation. You should return to play only when clearance is granted by a health care professional.

If you experience an overuse injury, it can often be treated with modifications to activities. Contact your doctor for proper diagnosis and treatment of any injury that does not improve after a few days of rest. In many cases, pushing through pain can be harmful, especially for stress fractures, knee ligament injuries and any injury to the head or neck.

## How can soccer injuries be prevented?

- Have a pre-season physical examination
- Use well-fitting cleats and shin guards
  - There's some evidence that molded and multi-studded cleats are safer than screw-in cleats
- Be aware of poor field conditions
- Use properly sized synthetic balls
  - Leather balls that can become waterlogged and heavy are more dangerous
- Watch out for mobile goals that can fall on players
- Hydrate adequately, because waiting until you are thirsty is often too late
- Pay attention to environmental recommendations
- Maintain proper fitness
  - Injury rates are higher when you haven't adequately prepared
- Progress back into activities after an injury with aerobic conditioning, strength and agility training
- Help avoid overuse injuries by not over training
- Listen to your body and decrease training time and intensity if pain or discomfort develops
- Speak with a sports medicine professional about injury and prevention strategies

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## Need immediate treatment for a soccer injury?

The Children's Health<sup>SM</sup> 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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