

TIPS ON HOW TO PREVENT SPORTS INJURIES

Now with fall sports like football and soccer underway, many young people are attending multiple practices and games. Although sports are fun, that good time can lead to a lot of pain if a person isn't careful. Sue Hillman, A.T.C., P.T., Director, Human Anatomy Associate Professor, Arizona School of Health Sciences and athletic trainer provides tips on how to prevent sports injuries:

- **Stretch properly before any activity.** Treat stretching and warm-up as part of the workout. Many sports injuries can be prevented if the athlete would warm-up properly and loosen the muscles for activity. Do several repetitions of stretches to increase flexibility and reduce the risk of injuries such as muscle cramps and strains, and more serious joint-related injuries.
- **Stay hydrated.** Dehydration can lead to side stitches and muscle cramps, as well as much worse problems. Make sure to drink plenty of fluids before, during and after activity.
- **Weight training can be helpful for all activities.** Stronger muscles absorb more impact and help protect joints and bones against injury. Lift weights as part of your weekly routine.
- **Keep equipment in top shape.** Many injuries can be easily avoided by maintaining the equipment, such as shoes and helmets. Make sure shoes are appropriate for the surface and replace them if worn-out or uncomfortable.
- **When outside, protect skin and muscles against the severity of the weather.** When the sun is out, apply sunscreen to avoid a severe burn, also wear lightweight clothing so sweat is able to evaporate and radiant heat is reflected away. Once it gets cooler, wear warmer clothing that covers skin and protects against frost bite.
- **Keep a positive attitude and be smart.** No one looks to get injured, so play smart and try to avoid situations where someone may get hurt.

Unfortunately, injuries can be part of the game, so

if an injury does occur, use the **R.I.C.E.** method — rest, ice, compression and elevation. This will help control the swelling and bleeding in the tissues. If your team has an athletic trainer, be sure to report your injuries to them so they can help you in the right care of your injury.

- Rest the injured area and keep weight off of it for at least 24 hours
- Ice the injured area until the area no longer feels warm
- Compress the injured area by wrapping it in a cloth bandage
- Elevate the injured area to help reduce swelling

Play hard, have fun and be safe!

