



GUIDE TO SOCCER INJURY PREVENTION

Soccer is one of the most widely played sports in the world and is characterized by short sprints, rapid acceleration or deceleration, turning, jumping, kicking, and tackling. An elite player covers on average between five and seven miles per game.

- The most common injuries are: hamstring strains, groin strains, ankle sprains, knee sprains, foot sprains, and concussions.
- Injury risk factors include: mechanical instability in ankles or knees, general joint laxity, functional instability, poor posture, lack of strength training, lack of endurance training, low training-to-match ratio, and playing on a hard surface.
- Boys aged 11 to 14 are at a special risk. During puberty, height increases faster than muscle growth. The tall, weak boy gets injured more often than the shorter, less mature or the taller more mature boy.
- ACL injuries mainly occur in plant and cut moves or one-leg landings without direct contact with other players.

INJURY PREVENTION MEASURES

- **The National Athletic Trainers' Association suggests that high school athletes engage in conditioning training at least six weeks before the start of practice.**
- **Avoid head flicking the ball.** Take a step back and control it with your chest or thigh.
- **Previous injury is the most important risk factor for injury.** Do not return to play too soon. Follow your doctor's recommendations. Your team needs its players on the field, not on the sidelines.
- **Proper Warm-Up is essential to injury prevention.**
- **Proper strength training will decrease injuries.**
 - Learning to squat, jump, land, change direction, and balance will help prevent knee and ankle injuries
 - Performing specific hamstring and groin exercises will help prevent pulls to these areas.
- **Use properly fitting cleats and shin guards.**
- **Never leave a goal unsecured.**
- **Up to 50 percent of traumatic soccer injuries are due to foul play. Avoid collisions.**
- **Make sure first aid is available at all games and practices.**