

# Webster Youth Sports Council Health & Wellness Initiative

## STAYING IN THE GAME WITHOUT INJURY: THE BENEFITS OF PLAYING MULTIPLE SPORTS, ACTIVE RECOVERY STRATEGIES, AND A SOLID STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING PROGRAM

By Eric Keene PT, DPT, OCS, CFMT, CSCS - Co-Clinic Director at Lattimore of GRPT in West Webster



I loved playing sports as a kid; but, my body didn't always love me for it.

I can remember joking around with my friends in middle and high school about our aches and pains. Unfortunately, injuries were pretty common as well.

My main sports were hockey, baseball, and basketball. When I was 10, 11, and 12, I didn't really run into many problems playing – I just enjoyed playing with my friends. But, as I got older and more competitive, that's when my knees started to ache. I'd limp after games. I was living on advil. The ice packs, which I hated, would be wrapped around my knees.

I loved my experience in youth sports and I have always been active. In college I played hockey and studied Exercise Science to become a Strength and Conditioning Specialist. I did that for 5 years before I realized that every athlete that I wanted to help get better at their sport was already struggling with some kind of pain that was impeding our training.

In order to try and solve my athletes' problems, I decided to become a doctor of physical therapy. I've been happily helping people manage their aches and pains for the past 10 years.

I wish I knew then what I know now. The goal of writing this article is to help the next generation of athletes

have a positive experience in sports and stay in the game without injuries.

### PLAYING MULTIPLE SPORTS:

What do Josh Allen, Bo Jackson, Patrick Mahomes, Deon Sanders, and Michael Jordan all have in common? All of them played multiple sports.

It may be counterintuitive, but playing multiple sports actually reduces injury risk compared to just playing one sport. Why is that? Certain research has shown that adolescents who participate in only one sport tend to do it year round, which can lead to overuse injuries due to the lack of rest and repeated stress on particular muscles, tendons, and ligaments.

Groin issues in hockey players. UCL strains in baseball pitchers. ACL tears in soccer players. Every sport has their potential risks that can be mitigated by playing multiple sports and becoming a well-rounded athlete.

### ACTIVE RECOVERY STRATEGIES: IT'S NOT OVERTRAINING – IT'S UNDER RECOVERY

I can remember playing travel and high school hockey at the same time in high school. I had so much fun, but if I had too many games in a row in a week or weekend I was pretty beat up come Monday. I'd take a couple days off the ice, and be ready to go again.

Some of the schedules I hear these days in sports are professional level, basically, practicing or playing almost every day. This can be exhausting to a young athlete, and playing exhausted and fatigued can potentially be an injury risk.



Started in 1993, the Webster Youth Sports Council is a youth sports advocacy coalition comprised of community sports groups in Webster, NY.

Rest is often a luxury our youth athletes don't always have; but, there are active recovery strategies that can speed up the process. Prioritizing sleep, soft tissue mobilization/massage, proper nutrition, and breath work are all strategies that professional athletes are using to better recover and manage some of those aches and pains that come from the demands of a busy season.

For my patients, I often recommend learning a foam rolling routine. If they are sore before a practice/game, try using the roller before to loosen up. Using the foam roller after a game/practice can also help to reduce some of the next day soreness. It's like having access to a 24/7 masseuse. If the foam roller is too intense, I'll also recommend "the stick", or "the tiger tail", which are great sideline alternatives.

Athlete or not, adolescents and teenagers need sleep to support adequate body and brain growth. Typically, 8-12 hours is recommended. Prioritizing quantity of sleep is important, but quality sleep can help to wake up feeling even more refreshed.

I have a 4 year old and 4 month old at home, so both quantity and quality of sleep are hard to come by; but, if you can prioritize picking up a book before bed as opposed to a phone or watching TV, studies have shown decreasing screen time before bed can help you to feel more rested when you wake.

## **STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING PROGRAM:**

Strength comes in different forms, but generally speaking if you think about a machine, the well-built, robust machines are the ones that have the most capacity to handle heavy objects and stress day in and out. Taking the time to condition youth athletes' muscles and tendons through a well instructed program is key to staying strong and healthy.

Qualified strength and conditioning professionals know how to tailor programs whether an athlete is in-season or off-season to help them stay resilient to common injuries in sports and help them to feel faster, more explosive, and improve first step speed.

## **SUMMARY:**

Between school, homework, friends, part-time jobs, and sports, our kids are often pushed to the limits. In order to avoid overuse injuries, playing multiple sports, prioritizing active recovery strategies, and participating in a strength and conditioning program can definitely help athletes playing and having fun.

I had so much fun in youth sports – let's set up our kids for success in sport and life.

## **The Mission of the Webster Youth Sports Council is threefold:**

1. Act as the primary advocate for youth sports in Webster in promoting safety, health, wellness and sportsmanship in the Webster Community by supporting and implementing age appropriate instructional, recreational and competitive opportunities for all skill levels.
2. Coordinate with the Webster Community Partnership, Webster Central School District and the Town of Webster to prioritize and schedule facilities for WYSC member groups use.
3. Capitalize on the unique spirit of cooperation between Webster Town, School District Athletic Departments, Community Partnership and community sports organizations to collectively focus on identifying and implementing the most efficient and effective means of promoting participant safety, coaching excellence, coach and player training and quality leadership in all community sports organizations.

## **Looking to Find Opportunities to Play Youth Sports?**

**Check the website: [websteryouthsports.org](http://websteryouthsports.org)**

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