



Webster Youth Sports Council Health & Wellness Initiative

OUR ATHLETES ARE GROWING: ARE THEY MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO INJURY?

By Dan McGuffie, PT, DPT, OCS

As we watch our children thrive as young athletes, it can be difficult to remember that they are still growing, which makes them vulnerable to injury. Most of the bumps and bruises these competitors acquire during their sport of choice resolve quickly and without complication. However, due to the repetitive stress on their immature muscles, bones, and ligaments, young athletes are more susceptible to over-use injuries. Skeletal maturity in females typically occurs between the ages of 15-18 – even later for males, between 18-22 years old. During these developing years, the stress and pressure on the body can lead to repetitive microtrauma to the immature tissue.

Extended recovery is necessary for these types of injuries, forcing athletes to sit out longer.

As Parents: we need to be aware of our young athletes and be willing to remove them from practice and competition when needed. Look for signs, such as increased rest or sleep at home, change in academic performance, and/or decreased interest in the sport. These may be indications that your athlete has not recovered 100%.

As Coaches: Get to know your athletes and pay attention. If you notice diminishing performance, such as decreased accuracy with throws or kicks, decreased speed, agility and reaction, and/or a greater desire for sitting or resting, your athlete may require extended recovery time that could remove them from the game.

As Athletes: Do not hesitate to talk to your parents and coaches about aches and pains. Recovery is easier, and faster, when injuries are caught early, allowing you to return to the court, mat, or field sooner. On the other hand, letting injuries linger allows them to worsen, which leads to tougher recovery and more time away from your sport and team.



Photo by RF_studio from Pexels

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

If an injury is suspected, it is important to receive a thorough evaluation from your health care professional. Medical consultations allow for a quick diagnosis and plan, including instruction on how to best promote complete tissue healing, so you can get back in the game.

It is exciting to see youth sports gain in popularity within our communities. As parents, coaches, and healthcare professionals, we want each and every child to have a safe and complete season within their sport of choice – that’s why it’s important to remember that when injuries occur to these young and developing bodies, even without a specific cause, seeking medical attention to address them directly and quickly is within the best interest of the athlete and the team.

AGE OF SKELETAL MATURITY

Females: 15-18 years old
Males: 18-22 years old

ASK YOUR PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Q: How much time is too much when it comes to my child’s participation in sports?

A: The truth is, there is no simple answer because each athlete has an individual tolerance and a unique ability to recover from the physical demands of competition and practice. That being said, there is research which indicates youth athletes who participate in more than 1.5-3 practices within a 48-hour window are at a higher risk for overuse injuries. These risks are well known, which is why most sports have developed guidelines for coaches and programs to follow in an attempt to prevent these types of injuries (this includes pitch counts and required rest days on regular intervals).

So, rather than asking “how much is too much?”, it is often more beneficial to assess if the athlete is getting adequate rest for the amount of activity they are doing. Consider this: it has been shown that getting less than six hours of sleep the nights between competitions puts young athletes at a higher risk for injuries. This is why it is extremely important - especially for kids participating on multiple teams simultaneously - not to overschedule and overcommit. To help prevent injury and allow developing athletes to perform at their best (and beyond), it is of the utmost importance to ensure they are able to get adequate rest and recovery time, in addition to proper diet and hydration.

WHO’S LOOKING FOR WHAT

Parents:

Look for signs of needed recovery – disinterest in sport, change in academic performance.

Coaches:

Recognize signs of diminishing performance - decreased accuracy, unusual rest/“taking plays off,” decreased speed or agility.

Athletes:

Discuss aches and pains with coaches and parents, a minor injury left unattended can quickly worsen.

DID YOU KNOW that all youth sports organizations in Webster belong to the Webster Youth Sports Council, which has guidelines for organizations such as “downtime” to protect our young athletes?

Did you know that it has been recommended to every organization in Webster that they take two consecutive months of downtime with no organized activities in order to protect and allow your young athletes to prosper and recover, as well as play other sports? If you didn’t know, we encourage you to ask your coach or organization about it and how they are implementing it.

Dan McGuffie, PT, DPT, OCS *Dan is the clinical director of Lattimore Physical Therapy in Webster. Originally from the Finger Lakes, he obtained his Doctorate of Physical Therapy from Ithaca College and completed an Orthopedic Residency program where he earned his Orthopedic Clinical Specialist certification. During his residency, he worked alongside the medical staff for the Dallas Stars of the NHL. He then worked in New Hampshire where he teamed up with the local youth sports association to educate coaches and parents on injury prevention and return-to-sport training. He is excited to be back in upstate New York with his wife, son, daughter and energetic dog – Freddy. He looks forward to being an integral part of the WYSC and the Health and Wellness newsletter!*

