

Youth Football Injuries Uncommon

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Every year, more than 12 million kids play football, and that number is ever-growing.

The well-being of young players is promoted through finely detailed safety practices and age/weight standards. Over the years, youth football leagues have adjusted the rules of the game to reduce the risk of injuries.

Evidence of the direct result of football's strict guidelines at the youth level is displayed in an analysis by the Mayo Clinic that indicated in a 2002 report that "the risk of injury in youth football does not appear greater than other recreational or competitive sports." In fact, the report stated that "youth football injuries are uncommon."

Two of the nation's premiere youth football organizations, Pop Warner and American Youth Football, set high safety standards for their players and coaches. Players are grouped according to their age and weight, in order to avoid mismatches, and different divisions are designed to overlap in age to offer maximum opportunity for safe participation.

Another important precaution at the youth level is the proper fitting of equipment. Youth leagues ensure that all players have high quality helmets, padding, and other gear when on the playing field, which greatly minimizes the risk of injury.

The fact that most injuries are predictable, and thus preventable, should make the issue of injury non-problematic. However, the most significant problems involving injury arise when players do not notify coaches or adults that they have been injured. Re-injury is also a common problem when both players and coaches do not allow proper time for injuries to heal. These problems are easily avoidable through instructing players to report injuries and afterwards insisting on the resolution of injuries before a return to participation.

While no physical activity will ever be totally free of injury, youth football programs are continually working to improve themselves and ensure that more kids each year benefit from the sport's many lessons.

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