

A Katy Parent's Guide to SPORTS INJURIES

Watch for the eight most common injuries
that might affect your student-athlete



Written by Julia Davila

Student-athletes often feel invincible and unstoppable from the moment they step on the field for game day. High school athletes who participate in multiple sports throughout the school year often experience on-the-field injuries. They may feel an immense amount of pressure to return quickly to the field after a sports injury.

“As an orthopedic surgeon, I have a responsibility to not only treat the immediate injury but also minimize the long-term effects of injuries in young athletes,” says Randal Camarillo, M.D., orthopedic surgeon at UTHealth/Memorial Hermann Katy Hospital.

Student-athletes should be healthy and cleared by their doctor before getting back into their regular routine. Sports medicine doctors have seen a common trend in athletes returning to play before they are ready - both mentally and physically.

1 DISLOCATIONS

Dislocations of the shoulder usually happen when the arm is being held straight out to the side and then forced backward.

Watch Out For: The muscle bulge from the deltoid is missing. An athlete will normally feel or hear a loud pop and can experience a severe amount of pain.

If It Happens: A trained health professional, EMT, athletic trainer, nurse, or physician, can put a dislocated shoulder back into place. Repeat dislocations can be avoided through strengthening the shoulder muscle through physical therapy.

2 ACL TEARS

One of the most common knee injuries is the tear of the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL). This serious injury will need surgical reconstruction in order to return to the field.

Watch Out For: Athletes will feel or hear a pop in their knee and be unable to continue their activity. The knee will swell and one is unable to walk correctly.

If It Happens: See an orthopedic surgeon or sports medicine physician immediately. “ACL injuries have been shown to be higher in female athletes than male athletes,” adds Dr. Camarillo.

3 DEHYDRATION

Most athletes who become dehydrated are simply not drinking enough H₂O. Other factors that can lead to dehydration include exercising in the heat when they are not accustomed to it, drinking too much caffeine, or having a viral illness.

Watch Out For: Extreme thirst, muscle cramps, nausea, and abdominal pain.

If It Happens: Pause exercising and drink water. If you can't hold fluids down because of vomiting, you may need to receive fluids through an IV.

4 CONCUSSIONS

A direct blow to the head is common in many sports, whether it be from a ball or another player, and can cause athletes to suffer from a concussion.

Watch Out For: Dizziness, headaches, blurry vision, inability to or delayed answering of questions, as well as appearing to be in a confused state of mind.

If It Happens: Stop physical activity and get plenty of rest. Athletes who have had a concussion can't return to the field without a doctor's clearance. Most recover within a week or two.

5 HAND OR WRIST FRACTURES

Fractures are usually caused by a fall. Wrist fractures are caused by falling on an outstretched hand while finger fractures are caused by another player striking an open hand or a blow from a ball.

Watch Out For: Swelling and pain with movement of the wrist.

If It Happens: Immobilize the affected body part with a splint or cast. Worst-case scenario, surgery may be required to reset the bone.

6 TURF TOE

Turf toe, or hyperextension of the big toe, usually happens when the athlete pushes off forcefully going forward on a hard surface, with the big toe being forced upward.

Watch Out For: Swelling and pain in the big toe.

If It Happens: In order for the swelling and pain to diminish, the student-athlete has to avoid running at a fast pace or pushing off. Apply ice if needed to reduce the swelling.

7 MENISCUS TEARS

The meniscus, C-shaped cartilage in the knee that serves as a shock-absorber, is usually torn with a twisting injury of the knee, sometimes after a deep squat.

Watch Out For: Excruciating pain when straightening or bending the knee as well as swelling.

If It Happens: Surgery is sometimes needed, or the tear may heal with rest. Stay sidelined from sports until the tear heals.

8 SHOULDER INJURIES

Shoulder injuries are common in baseball pitchers and swimmers due to repetitive motion. "Young throwers can also develop an injury to the growth plate at the top of the humerus bone with excessive throwing, known as little league shoulder," says Dr. Jorge Gomez, sports medicine specialist at Texas Children's Hospital West Campus.

Watch Out For: Severe shoulder pain, rapid swelling, and inability to move the arm.

If It Happens: Rest and strengthening of the rotator cuff muscles with physical therapy.

JULIA DAVILA was a student-athlete since she was 5 years old. She dreamed of playing college sports; however, an ACL tear crumbled her dream.



A meniscus tear often happens when there is a sudden twisting of the knee



Preventing Sports Injuries

- Wear cleats when playing on turf and wrap your toes.
- Monitor pitch counts for pitchers. Don't throw excessively during games or in weekly practices.
- Drink plenty of water - every 15 to 20 minutes - before, during, and after exercise.
- Limit play on hard surfaces, do agility training, and strengthen your quadriceps and hamstrings.
- Wear a helmet when biking, playing football, lacrosse, baseball, and softball.
- Always wear the required protective equipment for contact sports, even in practices or scrimmages.
- Build strength and flexibility through regular conditioning exercises.
- Wear wrist guards when skating, playing football, or rugby.

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