

Dangers of Sports

How frequently do sports injuries occur?

In the U.S., about 30 million children and teens participate in some form of organized sports, and more than 3.5 million injuries each year, which cause some loss of time of participation, are experienced by the participants. Almost one-third of all injuries incurred in childhood are sports-related injuries. By far, the most common injuries are sprains and strains.

Obviously, some sports are more dangerous than others. For example, contact sports such as football can be expected to result in a higher number of injuries than a noncontact sport such as swimming. However, all types of sports have a potential for injury, whether from the trauma of contact with other players or from overuse or misuse of a body part.

The following statistics are from the National SAFE KIDS Campaign and the American Academy of Pediatrics:

Injury rates:

- More than 3.5 million children ages 14 and younger get hurt annually playing sports or participating in recreational activities.
- Although death from a sports injury is rare, the leading cause of death from a sports-related injury is a brain injury.
- Sports and recreational activities contribute to approximately 21 percent of all traumatic brain injuries among American children.
- Almost 50 percent of head injuries sustained in sports or recreational activities occur during bicycling, skateboarding, or skating incidents.
- More than 775,000 children, ages 14 and younger, are treated in hospital emergency rooms for sports-related injuries each year. Most of the injuries occurred as a result of falls, being struck by an object, collisions, and overexertion during unorganized or informal sports activities.

Fast Facts about Concussions from Barrow Neurological Institute

- A concussion is an injury to the brain caused by rapid, forceful movement of your brain against your skull.
- Concussions are commonly associated with sports, but can happen any time your head is exposed to rapid speeding up and slowing down.
- You do NOT have to be knocked out to have a concussion.
- All concussions are serious.
- Some of the common symptoms of a concussion are: grogginess or loss of consciousness (even brief), being dazed, confusion, clumsy movements, slow speech, and personality changes.
- Some people are predisposed to concussions. Some risk factors include a past history of head injury and weak neck strength.

- The role of genetics and concussion is being studied.
- The brain is more susceptible in the very young and the very old to concussion.
- Athletes have a three times greater risk of concussion while they are recovering from their first.
- Collision sports have the highest risk of concussion - football, hockey, and lacrosse. The contact sports that have the highest risks of concussion include girl's soccer, followed by boy's soccer, then girl's basketball and boy's basketball.
- Concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury. Traumatic brain injury is the signature injury from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- To diagnose a concussion your doctor will perform a neurological exam.
- Both physical and mental rest is needed to recover completely from a concussion.
- Headaches are common during the recovery phase of a concussion.

Girls' Most Dangerous Sport: Cheerleading

For High School girls and college women, cheerleading is far more dangerous than any other sport, according to a new report that adds several previously unreported cases of serious injuries to a growing list. High school cheerleading accounted for 65.1 percent of all catastrophic *sports injuries* among high school females over the past 25 years, according to an annual report released Monday by the National Center for Catastrophic Sports Injury Research.

The new estimate is up from 55 percent in last year's study. The researchers say the true number of cheerleading injuries appears to be higher than they had previously thought. And these are not ankle sprains. The report counts fatal, disabling and serious injuries. Children ages 5 to 18 admitted to hospitals for cheerleading injuries in the United States jumped from 10,900 in 1990 to 22,990 in 2002, according to research published in the journal *Pediatrics* in 2006. The breakdown:

- Strains/sprains: 52.4 percent
- Soft tissue injuries: 18.4 percent
- Fractures/dislocations: 16.4 percent
- Lacerations/avulsions: 3.8 percent
- Concussions/closed head injuries: 3.5 percent
- Other: 5.5 percent