

# SOCCER INJURIES: PREVENTION & CARE

## PREVENTION

The first line of defense in the treatment of athletic injuries is to prevent them. This is accomplished with a well-planned program; competition among equal ability groups, proper warm-up and adherence to the Laws of the Game.

*Other factors that can lead to the prevention of injuries:*

- Proper use of equipment (shin-guards, no jewelry, uniforms designed for climate).
- Upkeep and monitoring of playing surfaces.
- Proper fitting shoes, proper type of shoe for surface.
- Ample water supply and breaks to give players rest.
- Avoid scheduling training during the hottest periods of the day and when there is intense humidity.
- Full rehabilitation of an injury determined by physician prior to return to play.
- Recommendation of a physical exam by qualified personnel prior to participation.
- It is recommended that the coach should follow up with a phone call about a player's injury to the parents whether or not the parents were in attendance at the game or practice.

*The coach or assistant should be responsible for assisting with injuries. This should include attending a certified first-aid course and knowledge of state and local ordinances.*

*Each coach should have and know how to use a First Aid Kit that includes, but is not limited to: Team Safety and Information Card, plastic bags and ties for ice, tape, Band-Aids, antiseptic, sterile pads, towelettes, gauze pads, elastic wrap, antibiotic cream and rubber gloves (CARE SHOULD BE GIVEN TO AVOID CONTACT WITH BLOOD AND BODY FLUIDS AND TO USE PROPER DISPOSAL OF ITEMS SOAKED WITH SUCH FLUIDS).*

## CARE

The care of the injured athlete will begin the moment an injury occurs. Immediate care will reduce the severity of the injury and the possibility of long term disability. The coach must remember that he/she is NOT a doctor.

*The coach, upon seeing an injured player on the field should:*

- Make sure that the airway is clear.
- Determine if the player is conscious.
- Ask how the injury occurred (player, teammates, officials).
- Ask the player where it hurts.
- If the player is unable to continue, he should be checked to determine the extent of the injury.

*After determining that the injury IS NOT life threatening, the nature of the injury can be further determined.*

- Note the position of the injured part.
- Look for swelling and deformity of injured area.
- Compare the injured area to the non-injured, opposite side.
- Ask the players and/or teammates what happened.

The treatment for minor injuries such as sprains, strains and contusions is referred to as R.I.C.E. (Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation). The R.I.C.E. treatment is the only first-aid procedure without professional advice that is a safe treatment for a sports injury. The treatment helps in three different ways. R.I.C.E. treatments, limited to 20 minutes, can do no harm to any type of injury. Almost anything else (including heat applications) can cause harm in some instances.

- Applying ice chills the injured area causing the blood vessels to contract, thereby closing circulation to the injured area.
- Applying pressure with an elastic bandage inhibits the accumulation of blood and fluids in the area, thereby minimizing pain and swelling.
- Elevating the injured area: decreases fluid accumulation to the injured area, puts the area to rest and helps to reduce painful muscle spasms.

*FOLLOW-UP* care should be considered if gross swelling or deformity is present, the player is unable to bear weight on the injured part, or severe pain or discomfort is present.

*Some familiar terms that you should know:*

- **SPRAIN.** Ligaments are bands of tissue that attach bone to bone and stabilize joints. A sprain is an injury to one or more ligaments.
- **STRAIN.** A tearing injury to a muscle or a tendon (tendons attach muscle to bone). Athlete may: hear the muscle tearing, experience muscle fatigue and spasm before occurrence, experience severe weakness or loss of muscle function, feel sharp pain upon occurrence, spasmodic contraction, notice extreme tenderness to touch and/or indentation to the body part.
- **CONTUSION.** A crushing injury to a muscle or tendon caused by an outside force that causes hemorrhaging to surrounding tissue.
- **ABRASION.** A loss of surface area of the skin caused by sliding.  
Care. The area should be cleaned with an antiseptic to prevent

infection. An antibiotic ointment should be applied to keep the wound moist and to destroy bacteria present.

### HEAT INJURIES YOU NEED TO BE AWARE OF:

- **HEAT CRAMPS.** An involuntary contraction of muscle or a muscle group that is repetitive and rapid in nature.

Care. Rest, drink water, and stretch.

- **HEAT EXHAUSTION.** Surface temperature approximately normal, skin pale and clammy, profuse perspiration, tired and weak, headache - perhaps cramps, nausea, dizziness, possible vomiting and possible fainting (the player will probably regain consciousness as the head is lowered).

Immediate Care. Move to a cool area, air conditioning is best; have the player lie down with feet elevated, remove restrictive apparel as appropriate, cool with wet cloths or by fanning. If alert - water may be given (1/2 glass per 15 minutes); if player vomits - take to hospital immediately and always refer to physician for further diagnosis, treatment and written release prior to return to activity.

- **HEAT STROKE.** Body temperature is high, skin is hot, red and dry, sweating mechanism is blocked, pulse is rapid and strong, and player may lose consciousness.

Immediate Care. Seek immediate medical care (Call 911). While waiting, treat as above for heat exhaustion keeping in mind that if you reduce the body temperature too rapidly, it can cause internal bleeding.

### *General principles when handling an injured player:*

- Avoid Panic.
- Use common sense.
- Seek professional help.

- Check for breathing, bleeding, consciousness, deformity, discoloration and/or shock.
- Dependent upon the nature of the injury, avoid moving the player.
  - Be on alert for injuries to the head, neck, and back areas.
- Inspire confidence and reassure the player.
- Determine how the injury occurred.
- Use certified athletic trainers when available.
- Always ERR on the side of caution.
  - If in doubt, call 911.
- It is recommended that if a player has had medical attention, he/she must have written permission from the doctor to return to activity.