

Sports Injury Prevention: Teens Warned Not to Play Through Pain

“No pain, no gain,” can be a dangerous mindset for young people training for school sports.

“That’s a mentality we want to get away from,” said Josh Lewis, a physical therapist and certified strength and conditioning specialist at NCH Healthcare System. “If you’re in pain, you need to stop and reassess how you’re doing.”

Injuries among young athletes are seen across all sports and ages, but often begin in middle school or when teens and pre-teens are new to the training, said Shelly Derby, an NCH physical therapist and certified athletic trainer. Derby advocates the development of a strong core as the first line of defense against the wide variety of injuries that bring teens into NCH physical therapy.

Derby is a member of a team of physical therapists at NCH that includes Lewis, Katie Burns and Mary Dwyer. They suggest the following tips for preventing injuries in young athletes:

- When beginning a strength program one should consider starting with developing core stability as the foundation for all movement.
- Cross-train by playing multiple sports and training in various styles and methods.
- Avoid over-training and doing only the same exercises repeatedly.
- Allow for movement adaptation based on body type.

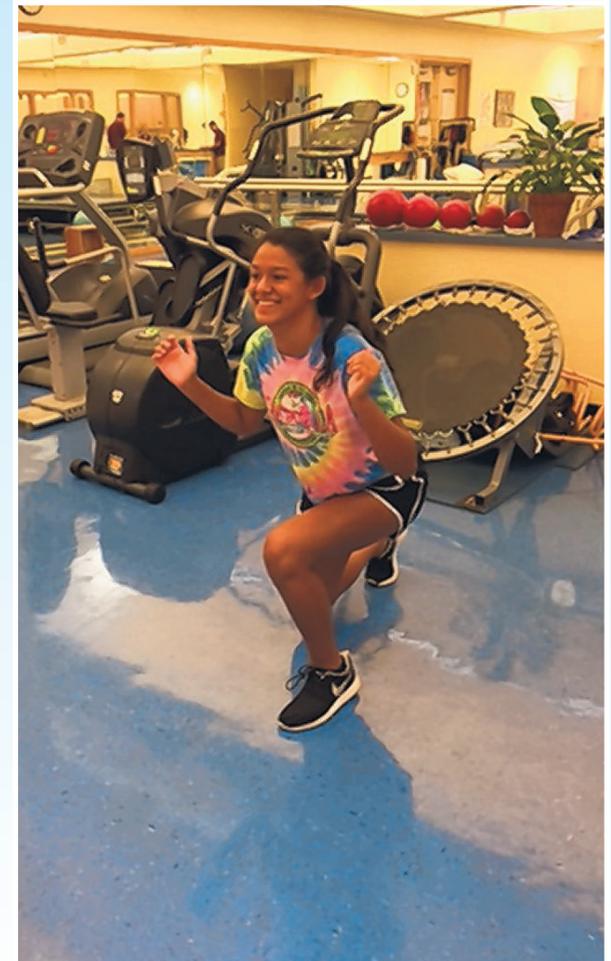
Common injuries seen in young athletes include knee, shoulder, ankle, and back injuries, among others. Severity ranges from muscle strains to injuries requiring surgery, such as a severely torn ACL, a ligament in the knee that stabilizes the joint.

One of the foundational core exercises is the plank where the body is held stiff as a board while propped up on toes and forearms for various periods of time based on fitness level.

Participating in fitness activities outside your sport can help reduce the risk of injury. This cross training allows athletes to reduce overuse of sport specific muscle groups, helping to balance strength and flexibility.

“Another important element in training is to acknowledge that we will develop differently and our training needs to respect that,” said Lewis. He adds that there is a difference between pain during a movement or exercise and soreness after the workout. “Pain during a movement or exercise can indicate an underlying problem, whereas soreness even 2-3 days after an exercise session can be normal depending on the intensity of the exercise and your own fitness level,” explains Lewis.

“The key take-away here should be that if you are in pain during movement or exercise it is best to be assessed by a medical professional which can help to reduce the risk of serious injury,” said Lewis.



Celeste Jimenez during her rehab following ACL reconstruction in preparation for return to volleyball.

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