

NEWS

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PARENTS PLAY IMPORTANT ROLE IN PREVENTING FOOTBALL INJURIES, SAY LOCAL SPORTS MEDICINE EXPERTS

DANBURY, CT (September, 2002)—When it comes to preventing football injuries in children and teens, parents can play an important role, say sports medicine experts at Danbury-based Connecticut Family Orthopedics.

“More than 150,000 football players under age 15 seek treatment for injuries in hospital emergency rooms annually and many of those injuries could have been prevented if players had taken proper safety precautions,” said James W. Depuy, MD, sports medicine specialist at Connecticut Family Orthopedics.

“Parents need to make sure their children wear the required safety gear every time he or she plays and practices and that they warm up and stretch before playing. Even though coaches tell your child to ‘tough it out,’ as a parent it is imperative you teach your child not to play through pain. If your child gets injured, see your doctor.”

Studies have shown that 15 to 20 percent of players age 8 to 14 are injured during the football season. Among tackle football players on high school teams, the injury rate has been reported as high as 64 percent, added Dr. Depuy.

“Mostly we see sprains and strains, with younger children hurting their arms, hands, and shoulders and older players often injure the lower extremities,” said David H. Elfenbein, MD, sports medicine specialist at Connecticut Family Orthopedics. “Knee injuries, in particular, often lead to chronic knee pain and warrant immediate medical attention. Concussions make up about 5 percent of reported football injuries.”

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other sports and health organizations recommend that parents do the following before a child begins competitive or recreational football:

- Have your child get a physical exam to assess any special injury risks your child may have.

- Make sure first aid is available at all games and practices.
- Make sure your child wears helmets and pads.
- Allow your child to play only with children of similar size and age.
- Instruct your child to play on grass, never in the street or in a parking lot.
- Recommend that your child stick to touch or flag football while playing at home
- Talk to and watch your child's coach. Coaches should enforce all the rules of the game.
- Keep football fun. Putting too much focus on winning can make your child push too hard and risk injury.

Connecticut Family Orthopedics of 33 Hospital Avenue includes six orthopedic surgeons, a podiatrist, and physician assistants, and has offices in Ridgefield and Bethel as well. For more information call 203 792 5558 or e-mail ct.fmly.orthpdcs@snet.net.