

## **Don't get kicked around this soccer season!**

Toronto— Soccer players young and old are ready to head out to the pitch for another action packed and fun-filled season. The world's most popular sport continues to grow across Canada, in particular amongst those aged 25 and under. With this in mind, the Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) urges young players to minimize their risk of major injuries by following several simple steps.

### **Tips to prevent injury:**

- Ensure you have a good balance of practice time, game time, and days off to prevent overuse injuries.
- Take the time for a good warm-up and be sure to spend time on flexibility exercises.
- Check the pitch – make sure playing fields are well-maintained and free of Hazards
- Use mouth guards – mouth guards reduce the number of injuries to the mouth or teeth.
- Protect your head and eyes – head and eye gear can help prevent serious injuries.
- Shin guards – help prevent soft-tissue and other more serious injuries to the legs.
- Play fair – rough play can injure others – playing fair and safe ensures everyone has a good time.
- Don't play with severe or persistent pain - minor aches and pains lasting up to 48 hours are acceptable, but severe pain or difficulty walking may signal a more serious problem.
- Consider using arch supports for comfort and for relief of minor heel or foot pain.

“Soft tissue, overuse injuries, as well as knee and ankle injuries are a common problem among young players,” says CPA member and sports physiotherapist Karen Orlando. “It's far better to prevent an injury with proper warm-up and stretching techniques, so you don't end up rehabilitating an injury that could cost you most of the playing season.”

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP; 2000) has highlighted several common soccer injuries players and parents should be aware of and work hard to prevent.

- Soft-tissue contusions (bruises) are the most common soccer injuries.
- Overuse injuries, such as stress fractures, can occur from over training.
- Fractures are relatively uncommon, accounting for 3.5% to 9% of reported injuries.
- Knee injuries account for 26% and ankle injuries account for up to 23%. But according to the AAP, fractures occur more frequently in the upper part of the body as compared to the lower extremity.
- “Heading” the ball showed potentially serious consequences such as cognitive loss. A study of adult players found that those who frequently “headed” the ball

showed “mild to severe deficits in attention, concentration, and memory in 81% of the players tested.”

- Eye injuries are also a common occurrence for players of all ages.
- Soccer is the second leading cause of injuries to the mouth and teeth in sports (basketball is the leading cause).

The CPA reminds athletes that chronic pain around the hip or knee joints or the lower back may be signs of more serious problems and should be checked by a physiotherapist.

The Canadian Physiotherapy Association and its more than 9,500 members want the public, other health care providers and governments to be aware of the important role physiotherapy plays in the health of Canadians. With their applied knowledge and understanding of the human body in action, physiotherapists work with clients to increase mobility, relieve pain, build strength, and improve balance and cardiovascular function. They not only treat injury, but they also explain how to prevent injury and the onset of pain that may limit activity.

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