

ATHLETIC INJURIES

The occurrence of an athletic injury causes distress on the part of the injured athlete, teammates, parents, and coaches. Is it bad? What do we do? How long will I be out? These questions immediately come to everyone's mind.

Following an injury the athlete becomes the recipient of a barrage of well-intended advice. Parents are left in a quandary. In an attempt to find quick answers, they often turn to a hospital emergency department for advice. While most hospital emergency departments are well-staffed and provide quality care, they do not provide an efficient or cost effective avenue of treatment for non-emergency athletic injuries. In truth, most athletic injuries are not dire emergencies and leave plenty of time for the athlete, parents, and coach along with the physician to develop a plan of treatment and rehabilitation that will return the athlete to play as soon as possible.

WHAT DO I DO WITH MINOR ATHLETIC INJURIES

Most athletic injuries are not emergencies. Parents can do a few things to care for the injury and minimize its extent until the athlete can be seen by the trainer and/or physician. The key to treating such injuries is to control swelling, reduce pain, and take measures to prevent the injury from becoming worse. The following are general guidelines that can be used in the treatment of most athletic injuries.

Contact parents and make arrangements to consult a doctor or take to hospital. Keep professional attitude and try to stay "low key".

- Follow the RICE guidelines:

Rest and avoid using the injured area. Make use of crutches or slings to take stress off of the injured area.

Ice the injured area by applying ice packs directly to the area for a period of 20 minutes. Rest for one hour.

Compression provided by an elastic wrap placed with mild pressure around the affected area would help control swelling.

Elevate the injured area above the level of the heart if possible.

- Avoid the use of heat, Epsom salts, balms, aspirin or other home Remedies unless acting upon the advice of a physician.

Many times the athlete may be able to ride the bus home and leave from school. If in doubt, always seek professional assistance (911). USE YOUR BEST JUDGMENT.

- Head Injuries – treat for shock (see below). Don't let them fall asleep.
- Arms-Legs – treat for shock. Immediately ice the affected area. Keep movement to a minimum.
- Body or Internal – treat for shock. Spitting blood is a danger sign. DO NOT GIVE LIQUIDS. Physician should be contacted as soon as possible.
- Neck or Spine – check breathing. If OK, no hurry, but do not move the athlete. Movement to the athlete may cause permanent damage. Wait for paramedic, or EMT or doctor to place victim on stretcher.

REMEMBER – In our business more harm is done by over treatment than by lack of it. If you do not know what to do, do not attempt anything. Protect yourself as well as the athlete. Call 9-1-1 and follow the Emergency Flow Chart.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Some athletic injuries are true emergencies and require immediate care in a hospital emergency department. The following conditions indicate the possibility of an emergency condition and should be seen by a physician as soon as possible.

- Loss of consciousness, confusion, memory loss, slurred speech, and/or headache that gets worse as time passes.
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- Abdominal or internal pain that is accompanied by a rigid abdomen, nausea, pale skin, dizziness, bloody stool, uncontrolled vomiting, and/or bloody urine.
- Limb is deformed (dislocation or displaced fracture).
- Numbness or an inability to move after an injury.
- Prolonged period of difficult breathing.

- Body temperature is abnormally high or low, or after practice in hot weather, the athlete's skin is hot, red and dry for an extended time.

- Severe Bleeding – compression at the wound, hold until clotted or until treatment can be obtained. Elevate the bleeding area.

- Shock – You don't need to know the symptoms, always treat for shock. Lie down and elevate feet unless injury prevents. Keep body temperature normal, avoiding chilling and sweating. Keep victim calm. Act calm yourself. Don't let the athlete know the extent of injuries if possible.

DO NOT GIVE LIQUIDS unless fully conscious