

Young Athlete Program: Lacrosse Injuries

UPMC Sports Medicine's Young Athlete Program brings together a network of specialists that provides individualized attention for injury prevention and management.

The goal of the Young Athlete Program is not only to treat athletes when injuries occur, but to focus on injury prevention and performance training to help them reach their full potential.

Our team of experts use cutting-edge, evidence-based techniques to help speed recovery, and quickly and safely prepare the athlete to return to competition. Physical therapists, physicians, athletic trainers, sports performance coaches, and other experts focus on prevention, nutrition, conditioning, and sport-specific training, tailored to an athlete's age and level of competition.

Common Lacrosse Injuries

Lacrosse is a youth sport that is rapidly gaining popularity across the country. It requires skills such as speed, agility, strength and awareness to successfully compete. This sport encompasses both contact and finesse, which is why lacrosse players are among the most well rounded athletes physically. For this reason, athletes who participate in lacrosse not only need to be strong, but agile and mentally sharp to ensure their safety and excel in the sport.

Some common injuries include:

- Muscle strains are common in low back, hip and legs
- Ligament sprains often occur in the knees and ankles
- Concussions
- Muscle/soft tissue contusions can occur in any part of the body that has experienced trauma and may lead to bruising or swelling.

Among more serious injuries, sometimes season-ending injuries are fractures including those of the spine, arm and wrist, shoulder dislocations and ligament tears.



Causes of Lacrosse Injuries

- Poor conditioning or training
- Poor flexibility
- Inadequate core, lower extremity and upper body strength
- Poor cardiovascular and muscular endurance
- Lack of proper fitting equipment
- Trauma (blunt force from stick slashing or physical contact)
- Non-contact / quick direction changes

Overuse Injuries

As a result of its increasing popularity, lacrosse has turned into a yearlong sport, which includes a rigorous season followed by offseason camps and training to prepare for the future. Due to the increase athletic demand of the sport, individuals tend to get involved in more performance enhancement training without proper rest. Continuous training, practicing and competing without rest can lead to overuse injuries.

If your athlete complains of pain or soreness that prevents him or her from participating for more than 48 hours, evaluation by a medical professional is advisable. He or she can also benefit from both upper and lower body strengthening programs to condition and prevent wear and tear on muscles, tendons and ligaments.

Preventing Lacrosse Injuries

Performing a good warm up is very important prior to engaging in lacrosse training activities or competition. Practice should begin with a cardiovascular warm-up followed by dynamic stretching of the upper and lower body. This will help to improve flexibility and increase blood flow to the muscles to allow the body to easily adapt to the demands of the sport. In addition, having proper conditioning can help to decrease the risk of injury when the athlete is tired, for it is during this state where most injuries occur in lacrosse.

Learning the proper rules and technique can lead to further injury prevention. With the increasing epidemic of concussions and other catastrophic injuries associated with lacrosse, it is important that athletes are taught and can consistently use proper technique to avoid potentially dangerous injuries. For example, know when and how to use the stick to play defense or knowing when contact is allowed can ensure the safety of the athlete and his or her peers.

Ensuring proper fitting and placement of all equipment can help to prevent injury. Improper fitting equipment such as loose helmet (boys) or face guard (girls), poorly positioned arm guards and gloves (boys), or poorly adjusted shoulder pads (boys) can lead your child to injury. Helmets need to be snug to support the head and neck during contact. Arm pads and gloves need to be properly positioned to prevent potentially harmful contusions and protect bony areas of the elbow, wrist and hands. Lastly, shoulder pads should be snug, but not restrictive to allow for normal breathing and chest expansion. There also should be a heart guard on all shoulder pads that maintains full coverage of the heart area to decrease possible impact from a shot or slash. Shoulder pads should also provide significant coverage of the chest and shoulder structures.

Screening Young Athletes

Our team of sports rehabilitation experts provide injury prevention screenings to young athletes. These screenings can help uncover existing injuries and areas of weakness, and can help prolong participation in sports.

These 45-minute screenings include:

- Flexibility
- Strength
- Functional movement assessment

The results of the screening will help determine if a young athlete needs to consult with a physician, participate in physical therapy, or consider sport-specific performance training. UPMC Sports Medicine has the expertise and comprehensive services to support young athletes.

Contact the Young Athlete Program

Regardless of age or sport, the Young Athlete Program has the expertise, technology, and services to make a difference for your athlete. For more information or to make an appointment, call **1-855-93-SPORT (77678)** or visit **UPMCSportsMedicine.com**.

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