

## Young Athlete Program: Basketball Injuries

UPMC Sports Medicine's Young Athlete Program brings together a network of specialists that provide 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 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 Basketball Injuries

Basketball players are no strangers to injury. After all, the game is extremely physical. There are the short, quick bursts down the court, the sudden stops and starts, and constant jumping, swatting, and shoving to get the ball. With all of that action, there are bound to be some sprains and strains. So, if your young athlete plays hoops at any level, it's important to be aware of the most common basketball injuries and how to treat them.

Most injuries incurred during basketball are the result of physical contact, either with another player or with the ball itself. Injuries can also result from jumps, falls, and overuse. Common basketball-related injuries include:

- **Sprained ankles:** An ankle sprain is the most common type of injury incurred during basketball. This injury usually occurs when one player lands on another player's foot or the player's ankle rolls outward. As a result, the ligaments that connect bones and support the ankle become stretched and torn.



- **Cuts and bruises:** These usually occur as the result of physical blows or falls.
- **Knee injuries:** Knee injuries often involve sprains or tears of the smaller ligaments, as well as the meniscus, the tissue that cushions the end of the bones in the knee joint. The anterior cruciate ligament, or ACL, is a large ligament that connects the upper and lower leg bones and helps hold the knee in place. If you tear your ACL, your knee may give way. ACL tears are among the most severe of basketball injuries.
- **Jammed fingers:** When the basketball hits the end of your finger, it can cause pain and swelling.
- **Overuse injuries:** Stress fractures (typically in the leg), rotator cuff injuries (in the shoulder), and patellar tendonitis (in the knee) are the consequence of using the same area repeatedly until it is damaged. Osgood-Schlatter disease is another common overuse injury of the knee.

## Preventing Basketball Injuries

Ideally, basketball injury prevention and training begins three weeks before the start of the season. This allows young athletes to build a base of strength and endurance. For many athletes, this preseason training may be hard because of time constraints. But, even minor conditioning is better than none at all. Try to get at least a base level of conditioning in the weeks or months before your season begins.

- **Stay fit:** Adhere to a good fitness routine during the off-season so that you remain in optimal physical condition even when you're not playing. Have a physical exam by your doctor before the basketball season begins.
- **Stretch it out:** Cold muscles are more prone to injury. Perform a 10 to 15 minute warmup before playing, and stretch your muscles afterward.
- **Play fair:** Use proper technique when passing and scoring. Play only your position, and refrain from pushing, holding, or tripping your opponents.
- **Check your equipment:** Make sure that you are wearing basketball sneakers that fit properly. A mouth guard, elbow and knee pads, and ankle supports can also help keep you safe.
- **Take a break:** You can decrease your risk of injury by taking regular breaks from basketball and engaging in other physical activities.

## Basketball Conditioning Drills

Like the "stay fit" section briefly mentions, a good fitness routine will help you remain in optimal physical condition to play basketball. Try out these three conditioning drills the next time you step on the court; they'll help keep you in shape, therefore lessening the chance of sustaining an injury.

- **Star Drill:** This improves your ability to change direction quickly and be aware of your body position.
  - > Place 4 cones in a square, 8 to 10 feet apart.
  - > Stand in the center of the square, and have your drill partner point to a cone.
  - > Run to the cone, touch it, and return to the center as fast as you can. Before you're back to the center, your partner should point to the next cone you have to touch.
  - > Start with 30 seconds, and build to a minute or two.

- **Zigzag Drill:** This helps you practice quick bursts of speed and shifting direction.
  - > Place 6 cones on the court in a zigzag pattern (cones should be about 16 feet apart and at 45-degree angles).
  - > Start at the first cone. Sprint to the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth cones.
  - > Reverse the pattern and return to the first cone.
  - > Repeat for 30 seconds, and build up to a minute or two.
- **Medicine ball shuffle:** This works your shuffling skills, balance, strength, and ability to stay low.
  - > Stand at one end of the court facing your partner, who is a foot or two away from you.
  - > Do a sideways shuffle for the length of the court, passing the medicine ball back and forth.

## 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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