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**Lowering The Risk Of High School Football Injuries**

**By Jonathon Hardcastle**

Football is a dangerous sport. Players endure bruising contact, long practices in hot weather and all sorts of unusual stresses and strains on their muscles, ligaments and tendons. It is not possible to prevent injuries in the game of football and for this reason many parents are hesitant to allow their children to participate. But the risk of injury can be minimized with cooperation between parents, doctors and coaches.

When your child comes to you and asks to try out for football, your answer should always be contingent on the results of a full medical checkup. Be sure that the doctor knows that it is a sports physical so that he or she can check for the appropriate things like joint flexibility and heart health. After your child is cleared medically, then you can move on to investigating the program and learning what safety measures are provided.

One of the most important facets of avoiding injury in any sport is maintaining proper conditioning through exercise and good nutrition. Ask your child's potential coach how conditioning is handled. Year-round conditioning is ideal, but barring that, children should participate in appropriate conditioning programs for at least six weeks prior to the beginning of regular practices. Ask whether the coach is responsible for conditioning or if the program has a trainer that works with children.

Dehydration is a critical issue among football players since practices typically occur outdoors during the hottest part of the summer. Ask the coach what measures are taken to prevent dehydration. Know that fluid breaks should be taken about every 45 minutes and players should be allowed to drink all they want in order to keep properly hydrated. Also ask whether the coach, trainers or other personnel are certified in CPR.

Wearing protective equipment is a given, but you need to work with the coach to ensure that it fits properly. Whether or not the program requires it, your child should wear a mouth guard. Mouth guards are instrumental in preventing dental injuries and can protect against jaw and certain types of head injuries as well.

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Ask what medical staff will be on hand during practices and games should an injury occur. To prepare for the worst–case scenario, consider giving the coach or trainer an emergency health care authorization letter. This letter will allow your child to be transported and treated at a hospital even if you are not there to give permission.

Jonathon Hardcastle writes articles for

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### **Sports Players Need Health Insurance**

**By Elizabeth Newberry**

It might be midget league football. It might be little league baseball. It might be the high school cheerleading squad. Whatever it is, your children probably feel as if it's the NFL, MLB, or the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders. You, and the rest of your town, probably support your children just as fervently as if they were playing in those big–time sports.

Yes, we Americans love our sports.

They're enjoyable to play and exciting to watch. Players and spectators alike take pleasure in sports; however, sports are sometimes more than just fun and games. Sometimes sports are injuries waiting to happen. Many times sports injuries go beyond sprained ankles and broken bones to the more serious sports injuries such as concussions and paralysis.

That's why it's so important for your children to have good health insurance. Although sports are fun, any child playing any kind of sport is at risk for injury - mild or major. If your daughter falls off the top of a cheerleading pyramid, or your son doesn't jump right up after being tackled on the field, the school and the on–site medical personnel, including local ambulances that are always present at school sporting events, are going to do everything they can to help. But once your child gets to the emergency room, who's going to pay the doctor bill? Your health insurance.

These days, many schools require all students wishing to participate in a school sport to provide evidence of health insurance. This means that you, Mom and Dad, get to fill out some paperwork or even drag out a copy of the insurance card. You don't want to deny your child the chance to participate

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in school sports, just as you don't want to get slammed with an outrageous doctor bill in the event of an accident.

You can't always be by their sides protecting them, but you can make sure your children have adequate health insurance.

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