

[IMAGE]

Injuries: The Downside of the Sporting Life

Each year, an estimated two million high school athletes are injured while practicing or in the course of a game. Most studies of high school athletic injuries have looked at specific sports, or a variety of sports at just one school. A new study has taken a much broader view of sports injuries at the high school level, with significant findings that could affect the care of both male and female athletes.

This study of more than 6,100 varsity-level athletes from 15 high schools compared injury rates among boys and girls who participated in the same sports (baseball/softball, basketball, soccer, track/cross-country, tennis, or lacrosse). The students were followed for one year, with information collected on the student's age, gender, sport, skill level, injured body part, type of injury, and days lost due to injury.

Overall, 966 injuries occurred - 515 among girls, and 451 among boys. There were significant differences in injury rates between boys and girls for each area of the body. Girls were more likely to injure their ankles, knees, and tibias, while boys had a higher rate of injuries to the tendoachilles complex of the foot. Girls suffered more major injuries (loss of seven days or more) in basketball and soccer, while boys incurred more major injuries while playing baseball or softball.

Understanding why certain types of injuries occur more often among female athletes than male athletes, or during one type of sport compared to another, is crucial to preventing these types of injuries from happening in the future. This information can also be used by doctors of chiropractic, athletic trainers, and others to design effective injury-prevention and rehabilitation programs in the future.

Goldberg A, et al. Injury rate and injury risk in female vs. male high school athletes in gender-matched sports: a prospective cohort study. Presented at the American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference and Exhibition, Washington, D.C., Oct. 9, 2005.

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