

[IMAGE]

Are Parents Ignoring Concussion Risks?

By Editorial Staff

Despite national headlines of late regarding the dangers of concussions and a growing awareness that organized athletics – from an early age all the way up to the pros – carries with it increasing risks for concussions and concussion-related injuries, a recent survey suggests many parents – even when aware of the risks – still believe tackle football is the right choice for their child. The survey, which featured 300 respondents, all fathers who played football at the high-school level or beyond, yielded the following eye-opening statistics:

Nine in 10 fathers who suffered or suspect they might have suffered a concussion while playing football said they still want their son(s) to play tackle football. Seventy-seven percent believe tackle football is safe for their children, and 43 percent believe there is "too much hype" about the dangers of concussions. What's more, according to the survey, fathers said the majority of mothers (61 percent) agree that tackle football is safe for their children.

But parents aren't the only ones who seem underwhelmed by the profound short- and long-term dangers of concussions. Consider these additional survey findings: More than one-third of football fathers said youth athletes don't understand concussion dangers and don't take precautions; almost one-third said coaches don't take precautions, even though they understand the dangers; and more than one-third said they believe their child's coach cares more about winning than safe play.

Concussion Risks - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark In case anyone thinks concussions – at any age – aren't a big deal, consider that major organizations at both ends of the competitive football spectrum recently addressed the issue. At the youth end, Pop Warner announced a few months ago that it was instituting several changes to reduce concussion risk, including limiting the amount of full-contact practice time and prohibiting both head-to-head hits and tackles initiated beyond 3 feet. Meanwhile, the National Football League instituted several on-the-field changes, including moving up kickoffs (presumably so more kickoffs go into the endzone and are downed instead of being returned) ; as well as penalizing and/or fining players for all helmet-to-helmet hits.

Those are great initial steps, but it definitely doesn't change the inherent risks that come with the game. After all, a recent study of 34 former NFL players found that many suffered from depression, cognitive deficits and/or difficulties with memory, reasoning and problem-solving. With an estimated 300,000 sports-related concussions occurring annually in the U.S., let's hope parents, coaches, youth athletes and anyone else involved in football or any other sport understands the dangers of concussions and does everything possible to avoid them.

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