SURGEONS CHOICE™
MEDICAL CENTER

Health Notes

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Lighten the load this school year

Orthopaedic surgeons offer backpack safety tips

Parents, teachers and students across the country are in the back-to-school mindset focused on a successful year ahead.

As the experts in bone and joint health injury prevention, members of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) remind us that heavy backpacks can be a source of back, neck and shoulder-related pain in adolescents and adults. In fact, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), in 2018, emergency departments, doctors' offices and clinics treated 50,635 people for backpack-related injuries.

"Back pain due to improperly wearing and overloading a backpack is a common symptom," states Afshin Razi, MD, FAAOS, orthopaedic spine surgeon and AAOS spokesperson. "To limit injuries or back pain, encourage your children to limit the load and utilize both padded straps for proper posture and weight distribution."

While U.S.-based organizations vary on how much weight one should carry, on average it is suggested a healthy child with an appropriate body mass index should not carry more than 10% to 20% of their body weight in a backpack.

Decrease your chances of backpack-related injuries this school year by following these simple tips from orthopaedic surgeons at the AAOS:

- Always use both shoulder straps
- Tighten the straps to keep the load closer to the back. The bottom of the backpack should sit at the waist.
- Organize the items: pack heavier things low and towards the center.
- Pack light, removing items if the backpack is too heavy. Carry only those items that are required for the day, and if possible, leave unnecessary books at home or school.
- When picking up a backpack, lift properly by bending at the knees.

Parents also can help with backpack-related matters:

- Watch your child put on or take off the backpack to see if it is a struggle. If the backpack seems too heavy for the child, have them remove some of the books and carry them in their arms to ease the load on the back.
- Do not ignore any back pain in a child or teenager.
- Talk to the school about lightening the load. Team up with other parents to encourage changes.
- Encourage your child to stop at his or her locker when time permits throughout the day to drop off or exchange heavier books.

"Lighten the Load This School Year." AAOS Online Newsroom, American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, 19 Aug. 2019, http://newsroom.aaos.org/media-resources/Press-releases/backpack-injury-prevention.htm.

A Guide to Safety for Young Athletes

For young athletes, sports activities are more than play. Participation in athletics improves physical fitness, coordination, and self-discipline, and gives children valuable opportunities to learn teamwork.

Because young athletes are still growing, they are at a greater risk for injury than adults. The consequences of overdoing a sport can include injuries that impair growth, and may lead to long-term health problems.

Fortunately, many youth sports injuries can be prevented. Some of the more effective ways to prevent these injuries include age-specific coaching, appropriate physical conditioning, and proper use of equipment.

In addition, coaches and parents can prevent injuries by fostering an atmosphere of healthy competition that emphasizes confidence, cooperation, and a positive self-image, rather than just winning.

Differences Between Child and Adult Athletes

Children Are Still Growing

The young athlete is not a smaller version of an adult. Children's bones, muscles, tendons, and ligaments are still growing, making them more susceptible to injury. In addition, there are significant differences in coordination, strength, and stamina between children and adults.

Children Vary in Size and Maturity

Young athletes of the same age can differ greatly in size and physical maturity. Grade school students are less likely to experience severe injuries during athletic activities because they are

smaller and slower than older athletes. High school athletes, however, are bigger, faster, stronger, and capable of delivering tremendous forces in contact sports.

Children Can Injure Growth Plates

Growth plates are the areas of developing cartilage at the ends of long bones where bone growth occurs in children. The growth plates are weaker than the nearby ligaments and tendons. A twisted ankle that might result in a sprain in an adult, could result in a more serious growth plate fracture in a young athlete. Growth plate injuries have the potential to disrupt the normal growth of bone.

Common Youth Sports Injuries

Acute Injuries

Acute sports injuries are caused by a sudden trauma, such as a twist, fall, or collision. Common acute injuries include broken bones, sprains (ligament injuries), strains (muscle and tendon injuries), and cuts or bruises.

Most acute injuries should be evaluated by a doctor. Prompt first aid treatment should be provided by coaches and parents when the injury occurs. This usually consists of the RICE method: rest, applying ice, wrapping with elastic bandages (compression), and elevating the injured arm, hand, leg, or foot. This usually limits discomfort and reduces healing time. Proper first aid will minimize swelling and help the doctor establish an accurate diagnosis.

Overuse Injuries

Overuse injuries occur gradually over time, when an athletic activity is repeated so often, parts of the body do not have enough time to heal between playing. Examples of overuse injuries include throwing injuries in the elbow, Achilles tendinitis, and shin splints.

Coaches may have more difficulty spotting less severe problems, however, because the pain is low grade and the athlete often ignores it. Repeat injuries may turn into overuse conditions, which can put the athlete on the sidelines for the rest of the season.

- To keep athletes in the game long-term, overuse injuries need to be diagnosed and treated by a physician as soon as possible. Parents and coaches should be aware of the more common signs of overuse injury. These include:
- Pain. This pain cannot be tied to an acute injury, such as from a fall. The pain often increases with activity
- Swelling
- Changes in form or technique
- Decreased interest in practice

In the growing athlete's musculoskeletal system, pain from repetitive motion may appear somewhere besides the actual site of the injury. For instance, a knee ache in a child or adolescent may actually be pain caused by an injury to the hip.

Whether an injury is acute or due to overuse, a child who develops a symptom that persists or that affects his or her athletic performance should be examined by a doctor. A child should never be allowed to "work through the pain."

Strategies for Preventing Youth Sports Injuries

There are several strategies that coaches, parents, and athletes can follow to help prevent sports injuries. Most importantly, athletes should:

- Be in proper physical condition to play a sport (a pre-participation sports physical examinations can be very useful in screening for potential problems)
- Know and abide by the rules of a sport
- Wear appropriate protective gear (for example, shin guards for soccer, a hard-shell helmet when facing a baseball pitcher, a helmet and body padding for ice hockey)
- Know how to correctly use athletic equipment (for example, correctly adjusting the bindings on snow skis)
- Always warm up before playing
- Stay hydrated
- Avoid playing when very tired or in pain

Proper Training

Young athletes need proper training for sports. They should be encouraged to train for the sport rather than expecting the sport itself to get them in shape.

Young athletes also should follow a regular conditioning program (in conjunction with their coach) with incorporated exercises designed specifically for their chosen sport. In addition, a well-structured, closely supervised weight-training regimen may modestly help youngsters prepare for athletic activities.

STOP Sports Injuries

Many sports injuries in young athletes – particularly elbow and knee injuries – are caused by excessive, repetitive stress on immature muscle-bone units. Doctors are seeing an increase in overuse injuries because many young athletes are focusing on just one sport and are training year-round. The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons has partnered with STOP Sports Injuries to help educate parents, coaches, and athletes about how to prevent overuse injuries.

A Guide to Safety for Young Athletes - OrthoInfo - AAOS. (2018, February). Retrieved from https://orthoinfo.org/en/staying-healthy/a-guide-to-safety-for-young-athletes/

In the Spotlight:

Surgeons Choice Medical Center is pleased to announce our partnership with Michigan Premier Internists to our facility.

Please welcome Michigan Premier Internists board-certified medicine group:

- Dr. Fouad Batah, M.D.
- Dr. Izzat Carouba, M.D.
- Dr. Chadi Almhana, M.D.
- Yvonne Taylor, N.P.
- Randy Torres, N.P.

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Surgeons Choice Medical Center wishes you and your family a lovely holiday season!