

## Common Questions about Sports Medicine

### A parent's guide

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Parents of school age and high school soccer players often have questions about common sports medicine concerns. Does my child need extra protein? What's the best way to treat a blister? When should I take my child to the doctor after an injury? These questions and others are addressed here.

#### **What should I do if my child gets injured?**

The sooner you can begin to treat the injury, the better. At Minnesota Sports Medicine we recommend "R.I.C.E." for treating mild injuries.

- Rest
- Ice
- Compression
- Elevation

To rest an injury means to stop doing things that cause pain. Rest helps to prevent irritation and further injury. Applying ice or a cold pack to the injury helps to reduce swelling. Compression involves putting light pressure on the injury with a wrap or bandage. This can reduce bleeding and swelling. Elevation can also reduce bleeding and swelling. This involves raising the injured area above the heart.

Tell your school's athletic trainer about any medical concerns you may have. The trainer will advise you about the injury and help you plan follow-up care with a doctor if needed.

#### **When should I take my child to a doctor?**

Every parent will react differently when his or her child is injured. Most injuries can be managed at home for a few days if you act quickly using "R.I.C.E." However, if the symptoms get worse, last more than 5 to 7 days, or cannot be helped by over-the-counter medicine, see a doctor. If you're concerned about the injury, see your sports medicine doctor. Doing so can assure speedy injury treatment, and may help to return your child to the game more quickly and safely.

After seeing a doctor, your child will need a note to return to practice or competition.

#### **What should I do with a blister?**

Blisters should not be "popped" unless the pressure from the fluid inside causes too much pain. If you need to drain the fluid, use a needle that has been cleaned with alcohol or similar antiseptic.

Once a blister is open, the chances for infection increase. If possible, leave the skin on the blister to protect the skin underneath. You may also want to place a bandage over the blister to keep it from rubbing.

**Does my active child need extra protein?**

It is largely a myth that diets high in protein help to build and sustain strong muscles. Muscles become bigger and stronger with regular, hard exercise—not eating large amounts of meat, eggs and other sources of protein.

An athlete's diet should include 10 to 15 percent protein—the same as for the average American—or about 1 to 1.5/kg of protein. Most Americans eat two to three times this amount. The body turns unused protein into fat. If you think your child has a poor diet, consider seeing a sports medicine doctor for advice and possible referral to a nutritionist.

**Does exercise increase the need for vitamins and minerals?**

Research does not support the use of large doses of vitamins or minerals by athletes. In fact, high doses can be harmful.

A well-balanced diet with a variety of foods is the best way to ensure good nutrition.

**Are sports drinks better for athletes than water?**

Sports drinks are not helpful unless you exercise hard for more than 60 to 90 minutes. Cool water is the best “sports drink” when exercising less than 60 minutes. Muscles already contain enough energy to fuel this level of activity.

Sports drinks contain salt and carbohydrates that are necessary to keep muscles working properly when exercising longer than 90 minutes. Too, some athletes are “salty sweaters” and may require greater replacement of salt during exercise. Check with your sports medicine doctor for more information.

**Is it okay for my child to take performance-enhancing supplements?**

There are many products for sale that promise better performance, but there is little evidence to support these claims. These products are not evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration and therefore may not contain what is claimed on the label. In fact, they may also contain substances that are illegal and dangerous to the athlete.

Research shows that a balanced diet, plenty of fluids and rest, and sport-specific training are what athletes really need.

Minnesota Sports Medicine (MSM) is the official sports medicine provider for the Minnesota Youth Soccer Association. MSM is a network of orthopedic and sports medicine doctors who see young athletes in medical clinics through the Twin Cities.

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