

## ARTICLE BY JENN SAVEDGE

### Sports injuries: Girls vs. boys

Sports injuries are on the rise among kids, particularly girls. Here's how to keep your daughters safe, healthy and in the game.

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Fall sports season is upon us and if you have kids in school, chances are you have kids who are involved in some type of after-school sporting activity: soccer, football, gymnastics, basketball, lacrosse, field hockey, track and field, and so on. More than half of all high school students play some type of after-school sport. That's great news in terms of keeping kids healthy, but not so great when it comes to protecting them from injuries.

Sports injuries are on the rise for both boys and girls — nearly 40 percent of all sports-related injuries treated in hospital ERs occur in kids between the ages of 5 and 14. No matter what sport your kids are playing, it's important for them to play safely, wear the appropriate gear and protective equipment, and stay nourished and hydrated so that they can perform their best. Girls in particular need to be vigilant about the potential for injury.

According to statistics, in several sports — namely soccer, basketball and softball — girls have a higher rate of severe injuries (fractures and sprains) than boys do. And girls have double the rate of concussion. Do girls play rougher or are they just not as tough as boys? Neither.

Health experts blame differences in body mechanics for the discrepancy. Did you know that girls use their quadriceps more than their hamstrings and rely on ligaments more than muscles for running and jumping? Girls also tend to favor a dominant leg more often than boys do (I favor my right.) And

because girls have weaker neck muscles, they are more susceptible to a concussion when they suffer a blow to the head.

What can you do to protect your daughter from injury? Make sure she has all the right gear to play her sport, and make sure the gear fits correctly (and that she wears it all of the time.) Talk to your daughter's coach about adding some strength training to her workout routine to improve her overall fitness and reduce the likelihood of strains and sprains. And talk to your daughter about the importance of eating a healthy, well-balanced diet. If she wants to be an athlete, she needs to give her body the fuel it needs to perform. In other words, this is no time for a diet.