

## Football

Football is one of the most popular sports played by young athletes in the United States. This sport also leads all other sports in the number of injuries per year. Football is a full contact sport with players colliding into each other at high velocities. This makes football players prone to injury anywhere on their bodies.

### What sorts of protective equipment do football players wear?

There is a wide range of equipment that football players wear. This includes a helmet, a mouth guard, shoulder pads, hip pads with a tailbone protector, thigh pads, knee pads, cleats, and an athletic supporter. It is important for this equipment to fit properly. If the equipment does not fit properly, it can actually cause injury. There is no helmet which has been proven through research to prevent concussions.

### What are the most common types of injuries in football?

#### **Contusions**

Because of the nature of the sport, bruises or contusions are very common in football. Contusions are best initially treated with ice, compression and elevation of the affected area.

#### **Knee Injuries**

Football players commonly injure their knees. Sprains of the medial and lateral collateral ligaments (MCL/LCL) occur. More serious injuries of the anterior and posterior cruciate ligaments (ACL/PCL) and to the menisci (cartilage of the knee) can also happen. These severe injuries usually require surgical intervention for treatment.

#### **Shoulder Injuries**

Dislocations of the shoulder are common in football and occur when a player is being tackled or trying to tackle an opposing player. In addition, football players are prone to sprains of the acromioclavicular joint (AC joint), which is located at the end of the collarbone.

#### **Heat Illness**

Especially at the start of training camp, heat illness is a major concern for football players. Intense exercise in the hot and humid months of the year can result in excessive perspiration. This can deplete the body of electrolytes and water, which can impair the body's



ability to cool down. Heat stroke can occur when the body reaches temperatures of more than 104 degrees, resulting in organ damage and possibly even death. It is important that football players remain hydrated and drink water frequently while practicing and playing.

#### **Concussions**

Concussions are more common in football than any other high school sport. For more information, please refer to our concussion handout.

### How can injuries in football be prevented?

- Stay active during summer break to prepare for training camp
- Incorporate a strength training and stretching program into your normal routine
- Wear properly fitted equipment
- Hydrate adequately before, during, and after play
- When tackling, do not lead with the helmet
- Consult a sports medicine professional or athletic trainer with any concerns about particular injuries or prevention methods