

# Your Health



# Preventing Sports Injuries

**H**igh school athletes are naturally at risk for sports-related injuries. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, these athletes account for an estimated 2 million injuries, 500,000 doctor visits and 30,000 hospitalizations annually.

So what kind of steps can you take to make sure your high school student-athlete stays safe on the diamond, football field or track? As with most injury-related issues, it all comes down to preparation and preventive education.

## **MOST AT RISK SPORTS**

From baseball, basketball and soccer to football, wrestling and volleyball, high school athletics spread across a broad spectrum of activities. Some have higher degrees of contact and difficulty, putting kids more at risk for injuries.

Of the nine different sports studied, the CDC confirmed that football, girls basketball and wrestling had the greatest proportions and severity of injuries. While these findings point to some of the most dangerous activities, they aren't conclusive. You may think soccer is less dangerous than football, but studies have found increased occurrences of concussions in the sport. Golf may not seem like a very dangerous athletic endeavor to those outside the sport, but those who have participated know that injuries can take a toll.

## **TYPES OF INJURIES & SAFETY**

Just as there are many different

sports for boys and girls to choose from at the high school level, there are many types of injuries that can occur. These can range from cuts and bruises to mobility-limiting sprains and fractures.

Concussions have grabbed the national spotlight with Hollywood movies and high-profile athletes calling attention to the issue. The high-school level can be just as dangerous, so precautions must be taken when it comes to protecting the heads of student-athletes.

Safety is always the goal so that high school athletes can play, compete and thrive in their chosen sports. According to Kids Health (The Nemours Foundation), student-athletes should follow four guiding principles:

- The use of compliant and properly fitting equipment;
- The appropriate maintenance and integrity of playing surfaces;
- Adult supervision and commitment to safety; and
- Proper preparation.

If any of your child's athletic experiences fail to meet these standards, it's time to bring it up to your school board, coach or community leaders. We must work together to ensure the consistent safety of our children.



# Health and Desk Jobs

**B**rains are working hard while at a desk job, but the rest of the body is quite inactive. Special efforts are needed to stay healthy in this case. Why bother?

Because studies show that sedentary lifestyles can lead to health issues such as obesity, diabetes and mobility issues.

We owe it to ourselves, our co-workers and our families to get up from the chair every once in a while and keep our bodies moving. The success of our careers may depend on it.

## THE RISKS OF INACTIVITY

If you have a desk job, there could be physical consequences down the road even if you stick to a regular exercise routine. That means that no matter how often you try to hit the gym, your work situation may be hampering you in the long run.

Long periods of inactivity can put stress and strain on the whole body. Over time, according to Blue Cross Blue Shield, people who sit for a long time without moving are more likely to have joint, bone and posture problems. They also have increased risk of obesity and related conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and stroke, among others.

The physical effects will



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eventually lower energy levels and mental alertness. This sluggishness could affect your productivity at work. Develop a plan that you can realistically stick with over the course of months and years.

## MOVING AT WORK

We need to move to stay

healthy, so we have to think of creative ways to incorporate more movement during those eight hours at the desk.

The experts at BCBS suggest these tips:

- Take the stairs, not the elevator for a healthy burst of movement.
- Walk to a co-worker's desk

rather than calling or emailing. This simple step — or steps — can make a huge daily difference. You may be more productive, too.

- When someone comes to your desk, stand up to talk and use the opportunity to stretch your legs and arms.
- Take a brisk morning and

afternoon walk around your building. Your lunch break can make for the perfect time for a walk.

- If you run errands during lunchtime, walk briskly to and from your car. Park far away from your company's entrance if possible. Extra steps add up quickly.

# The DASH Eating Plan

**F**ind yourself trying the latest fad diets over and over again? That's because they are just that — fads! DASH is different because it is proven.

The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension has backing from major national health organizations for its simplicity and effectiveness in helping people healthier.

Need a little dash of DASH in your life? Follow the steps below to get started. Always remember to check with your physician first before starting any new diet. He will be able to give you advice that is tailored to your personal health and weight.

## THE PLAN

The DASH plan requires no special foods, which means participants can conveniently shop at their local grocery store. It includes daily choices from the different food groups, but the calorie needs and recommended intake will vary per person.

The plan limits daily sodium levels to 2,300 milligrams, meaning processed foods need to take a back seat to healthier, fresher options. Followers of the DASH plan need to pay special attention to food labels to make sure



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they're staying on track.

One thing the DASH eating plan specifically incorporates is more potassium. Some examples of potassium-rich foods include potatoes, yogurt, oranges and fish.

According to National Institutes of Health, here are some specifics to include in your DASH plan:

- Vegetables, fruits and

whole grains;

- Foods low in saturated and trans fats; and
- Foods rich in potassium, calcium, magnesium, fiber, and protein.

And here are some to keep out of your DASH diet:

- Anything high in saturated fat;
- Fatty meats or full-fat dairy products;

- Tropical oils, such as coconut, palm kernel and palm oils; and
- Sugar-sweetened beverages and sweets.

## HEALTH BENEFITS

There are obvious health benefits of the DASH plan, including lower salt intake, decreased saturated fats and moderation of calories. These

changes can contribute to lowering high blood pressure and bad cholesterol, helping you maintain a lower weight.

The DASH eating plan is just one key part of a heart-healthy lifestyle. To complement your new eating regimen, include adequate physical activity, limit alcohol, control your stress, quit smoking and get enough sleep.

# Donating Blood

**D**onating blood is a powerful way to help others. It is a very simple and safe procedure, and even people as young as 17 can donate.

People donate blood for many reasons. Maybe they are returning the favor after a friend or family member received blood. Maybe they do it for the health benefits. No matter the thinking, everyone can agree that blood donations are critical to our health-care system.

## THE BENEFITS

There are actual benefits to donating blood besides feelings of good will. Before a donation, blood donors receive a mini-physical that comes with a full report. According to the Red Cross, these aspects are reviewed during these checks:

- pulse;
- blood pressure;
- body temperature; and
- hemoglobin.

Why is this such a great benefit? During this check, it's possible that blood donation professionals may find underlying health issues. You could be alerted to something you didn't know about and prompted to follow-up with your physician for next steps.

## THE PROCESS

The process of blood donation has been refined and improved over the years. There are even different kinds of blood donation, and depending on what you are participating in, you will be given information on all of the related processes.

According to the Red Cross,

these are the basic requirements for donors:

- Be in good general health and feeling well;
- Be at least 17 years old in most states, or 16 years old with parental consent if allowed by state; and
- Weigh at least 110 pounds.

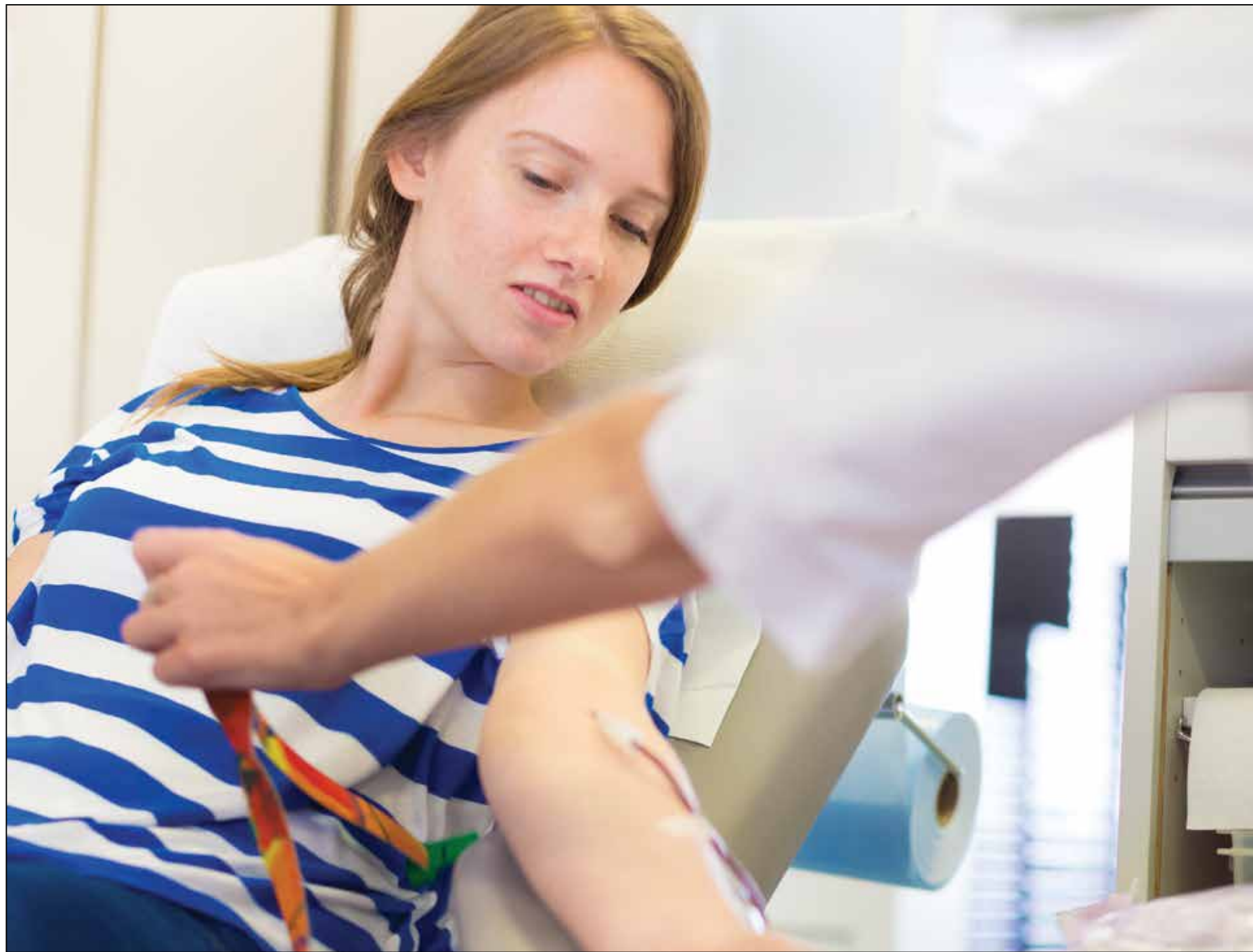
(Additional weight requirements apply for donors 18 and younger.)

Thinking of donating? The Red Cross recommends the following steps:

- Have a light meal and plenty to drink;
- Bring your donor card, driv-

er's license or two other forms of identification;

- Bring the names of medications you are taking;
- Wear something comfortable that can be rolled up easily; and
- Bring a support person if you feel a little apprehensive



# Dealing With Allergens

Allergies can be caused by the environment, food or reactions to medications. And without a doubt, they can all cause misery. Itchy eyes and scratchy throats are just the beginning for many allergy sufferers.

More serious issues can occur if allergies are not kept in check. If you suspect that you may be suffering from an allergic reaction — even if it is mild — you should consider making an appointment with your physician to investigate.

## WHAT ARE ALLERGIES?

According to the Mayo Clinic, allergies occur when your immune system reacts to a foreign substance by producing antibodies that identify a particular allergen as harmful, even though it isn't.

The National Institutes of Health identifies the following as common allergy triggers:

- Airborne allergens, such as pollen, animal dander, dust mites and mold;
- Certain foods, particularly peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, soy, fish, shellfish, eggs and milk;
- Insect stings, such as bee or wasp stings;
- Medications, particularly penicillin or penicillin-based antibiotics; and
- Latex or other substances you touch, which can cause allergic skin reactions.

If your family has a history of allergy problems, it's worth a checkup with your doctor to check your sensitivities.



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## BROAD SYMPTOMS

When an allergy sufferer comes into contact with an allergen, his immune system reacts. Skin can become inflamed, as can sinuses, airways and digestive systems.

This results in a runny nose, sneezing, itching, rashes, swelling or asthma. Allergies can range from minor to severe, and a life-threatening reaction

called anaphylaxis also can occur.

## TREATMENTS & PREVENTION

Sadly, there are many allergies that have no cure. Treatment and management are the only ways to relieve the suffering in many cases.

Nasal saline and 24-hour allergy medications or antihistamines can alleviate symptoms for many sufferers,

but it's important to check with your doctor before starting any new medication.

If dust or pet mites are causing your reactions, frequently washing your bedding in hot water can help tamp down the effect. Ventilation fans and dehumidifiers can reduce moisture in damp areas that may be ideal growing spots for mold.

# Maintaining Foot Health

Americans are busy, and our feet are suffering. They take the brunt as we rush through our daily activities at work, home and the gym.

And for those of us who simply ignore the problem, we may find that foot issues can impact the rest of the body in a hurry.

According to the American Podiatric Medical Association, over half of Americans say foot pain restricts them from walking and exercising. This pain can be chronic or due to injury. Either way, it's important to practice proper stretching and wear proper footwear to keep your dogs from barking.

## FOOT CONDITIONS

Regular foot care is vital to keep feet healthy and pain-free. Issues that are left untreated can sneak up on us and cause further damage. The continuous daily wear and tear can cause a variety of foot ailments, some of which can be serious.

Arthritis is one of these common ailments. Injuries can cause sprains and strains, which can be quite painful, and some diseases, such as diabetes, can cause further foot issues. All of these will limit your mobility.



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Skin disorders such as athlete's foot, corns and bunions are not as serious but are sometimes painful annoyances. Sweaty feet, ingrown toenails and fungus can cause social issues, along with their health consequences.

## TREATMENT & CARE TIPS

Sometimes feet just need to breathe. Rest and a good message can do wonders for aching feet, so don't be afraid to pamper yourself at the first sign of a flare-up. Other ideas for treating and preventing

foot pain include wearing shoe inserts or custom-fit orthotics.

If foot problems develop, make an appointment with your local podiatrist. They are the experts in foot care, so reach out to them. They will

be able to quickly gauge the seriousness of your foot troubles and prescribe any special treatments needed.

A podiatrist also will have tips on proper footwear for different situations to help your feet stay healthy.

# Benefits of Sleep

**S**leep is the foundation for overall good health. Without sleep we're grouchy and testy. With proper sleep, we're back to our old peachy selves.

Getting plenty of sleep will improve your quality of life both mentally and physically, so finding ways to increase your ratio of shut-eye to being awake should be an important part of your overall health.

Some of the benefits of sleep are quite obvious, because we can all relate to that feeling of rest when we sleep well. That gives us significant advantage over sleep-deprived people in many areas of life, including job performance and overall relationships with others.

But just how many of us are getting a full night's sleep? Not enough. About 70 million Americans of all ages suffer from chronic sleep problems, according to the National Institutes of Health.

## LACK OF SLEEP

Because Americans are very busy, sleep is sacrificed too often in order to keep up the pace. However, sleep deprivation actually decreases an individual's quality of life.

According to the NIH, although personal needs vary,



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on average, adults need seven to eight hours of sleep per night. Babies typically sleep about 16 hours a day. Young children need at least 10 hours of sleep, while teenagers need at least nine hours.

If we consistently fall below these averages, there are many negative consequences, including increased irritability, dulled senses and less energy,

according to the NIH.

## SLEEP TIPS

Getting enough sleep is easier said than done, and sometimes it is just hard to wind down after a long day at the office. Sleep can be disrupted by many things, including stimulants such as caffeine or electronic distractions.

If you're having trouble set-

tling into a consistent sleep routine, try these tips from the NIH:

- Go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning;
- Sleep in a dark, quiet, comfortable environment;
- Exercise daily (but not right before bedtime);
- Limit the use of electronics before bed; and

- Avoid alcohol and stimulants such as caffeine late in the day.

If these tips do not help, talk to your doctor. There could be physical reasons why you cannot sleep, including insomnia and sleep apnea. These conditions can be dangerous, but they are treatable, so it's important to visit your physician.