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Keep Young Athletes Injury Free

Athletic seasons ramp up in the fall for young athletes and with this comes an increase in foot and ankle injuries. Football, soccer, field hockey and cheerleading are sports more likely to lead to sprains, broken bones and other problems. Keep your child in the game this fall with these six tips:

- 1. Treat foot and ankle injuries immediately.** What seems like a sprain isn't always a sprain. Aside from ligament injuries, your child might have injured bones or cartilage without knowing it. Make an appointment with a foot and ankle surgeon for proper treatment if you think your child has a foot or ankle injury. Failure to treat injuries appropriately and timely can lead to long-term instability or arthritis later in life.
- 2. Have old sprains checked before the season starts.** A foot and ankle surgeon can tell whether a previous injury might be vulnerable to sprains and when an old injury may benefit from wearing a brace or other support during the season.
- 3. Get the right shoes for your child's chosen sport.** Each sport requires a different sport specific type of shoe. Football and baseball cleats are not interchangeable.
- 4. Start each season with new, appropriately-fitted shoes.** Old shoes wear down over time and become uneven on the bottom. When a shoe can't lie flat, the ankle will tilt, increasing the risk of sprains and strains.
- 5. Walk the field before any practices or games.** Check for dips, divots or holes as most sports-related ankle sprains are caused by running and jumping on uneven surfaces. Foot and ankle surgeons recommend checking the field for spots that could trip up a player's foot, especially for nonprofessional settings like parks. If you notice any irregularities, alert coaching officials.



6. Always encourage athletes to stretch and warm up before practice or games. Calf stretches and light jogging help warm up ligaments, muscles, tendons and blood vessels reducing the risk for foot and ankle injuries.

As this sports season starts, contact a foot and ankle surgeon to have your child's feet, ankles and athletic shoes examined. Visit [FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org) to find a doctor near you.

Starting School on the Right Foot



Heading back to school can be a hard transition for kids after a summer of freedom. Changes in routine can be tough on kids, but it shouldn't be hard on their feet. Most kids spend the summer in flip flops, but when it's time to head back to school these casual sandals can lead to aches, pains and increase the risk of injury.

Kids have growth plates in their heels that continue growing into their teen years, and flip flops lack the cushion or support that a foot needs. Repetitive stress from walking without cushion or support can be harmful

and cause inflammation, pain and tenderness to the bone growth area.

Fortunately, this type of foot pain can usually be eliminated with stretching, ice, anti-inflammatory medications or shoe inserts. **If your child is complaining from foot pain, schedule an appointment with a foot and ankle surgeon. Visit [FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org) to find a physician in your area.**

Hit the Trails Safely

Hiking is a great way to get exercise and fresh air while experiencing the beauty of changing seasons. Hiking-related injuries can range from relatively minor ailments such as blisters and bruises to more serious conditions like stress fractures or ankle sprains. These injuries may initially be seen as minor, overuse injuries that will fix themselves. Hikers may even attempt to treat the injuries by modifying their walk or pace by trying new shoes, but if left untreated they can lead to complications and further injury down the road.

Proper preparation before hikes can decrease the risk of injury. Here are some easy ways to keep hikes safe:

- Wear properly fitting shoes or boots to protect toes from blisters and toenails from bruises.
- Condition and break in footwear before your hike.
- Wear moisture-wicking socks to protect feet from the cold and excessive sweating.

- Be familiar with the hiking route and know your options for accessing medical assistance.
- Carry some first-aid supplies, such as bandages and wraps to help protect and stabilize injured feet and ankles.

If you suffer a severe injury while on a hike, go to the nearest emergency room for treatment. For less emergent injuries or for follow up care, see a foot and ankle surgeon. Visit [FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org) to find one near you.



Tips for Avoiding Achilles Tendonitis



If you have athletic shoes that bend in the middle when they're not supposed to, it's time for a new pair. Shoes that bend this way can put pressure on your heel and Achilles tendon. This is the largest tendon in the body and connects your calf muscle to your heel bone. When the middle of your shoe's sole collapses, it transfers pressure from the midfoot to the heel, which can excessively stretch the Achilles tendon leading to inflammation or tendonitis.

If you start experiencing pain and swelling in the back of your lower leg or heel following exercise, or your lower leg feels stiff and tired during or after exercise, you may have Achilles tendonitis. Rest, ice and anti-inflammatory drugs can be used as initial treatment. If symptoms persist, make an appointment with a foot and ankle surgeon to determine the severity of your injury, assess the risk for tendon tear or rupture, and select an appropriate treatment plan to keep you on the road to recovery.

Ways to Avoid Achilles tendon injuries:

- Replace your shoes every 400 miles.
- Always stretch and warm up before any strenuous exercise.
- Increase the difficulty or frequency of any new exercise programs gradually.

If you suffer from Achilles tendonitis or need help finding the right shoe for your favorite sport or athletic activity, talk to a foot and ankle surgeon for their suggestions. Visit [FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org) to find a physician near you.