

SPORTS MEDICINE TIP: Nose Injuries & Athletes

Fairview Sports and Orthopedic Care



Fairview's sports medicine and orthopedic tip of the month offers ideas to help soccer players stay healthy and prevent injury to keep athletes in the game. Our family of orthopedic services includes Fairview Sports and Orthopedic Care and the Institute for Athletic Medicine.

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Blows to the face are a common sports injury. Elbows, balls, and even the ground can cause injury to the face and nose. Because the face has an ample blood and nerve supply, injuries to the face and nose can be painful and are often bloody.

Bloody noses may occur from injury or from dry weather conditions and allergies. The latter typically do not bleed extensively and do not have accompanying trauma. They can be treated in the same way as bloody noses caused by injury, and should resolve quickly without need for further emergency medical care.

Nasal (Nose) Injuries

When assessing a nasal injury, it is important to determine severity and the need for further medical referral.

Examine the athlete to see if the nose appears to be in a straight line. A broken nose or nasal fracture may have the appearance of an "S" shape or appear crooked which could cause breathing obstruction. Nasal fractures typically bleed significantly, but not always. Reduction or straightening of nasal fractures should only be performed by a physician.

The type and extent of the fracture depends on the force and direction of the blow. Note that the nose is more resistant to a frontal blow than a blow from the side of the nose. Injury from a frontal blow may fracture the lower portion of the nasal bones or may completely separate the nasal bones from the frontal bone of the forehead. Both types of injuries will give the nose a flattened appearance.

When hit, the nose may swell or become discolored, making it difficult to determine the extent of the injury. If a broken nose is suspected, the athlete should seek professional medical care. The situation should be treated as an emergency if the athlete is in significant pain, the bleeding is extensive or doesn't stop, or if the athlete is having trouble breathing.

If an athlete has sustained a hit to or near the head, it is important to rule out the possibility of a concussion. Symptoms of a concussion include but are not limited to dizziness, vision changes, nausea, loss of memory, and changes in personality. If a concussion is suspected, seek further evaluation by a physician or certified athletic trainer.

How to Stop a Bloody Nose

1. Use a clean cloth to cover the nose immediately.
2. Have the person sit upright and lean slightly forward. Never have them lie flat as this could cause blood to drain down the back of the throat and trigger a gagging response. Do not have them put their head down between the knees as this could increase blood loss due to the head being lowered.
3. Using the clean cloth, firmly pinch the soft part of the nose just beneath the hard bridge of the nose. Hold for several minutes until the bleeding stops.
4. To help reduce pain and swelling, place an ice pack over the nose and affected facial area.
5. Bleeding must stop completely in order for the athlete to return to play. If nose plugs made of tightly wound cotton are available, place one completely inside the bleeding nostril. Cotton balls or smaller cotton tipped applicators should never be placed in the nose as they will fray or could become dislodged in the nasal cavity.

As with any injury, a quick but calm response from adults is important to lessen the stress level of the injured player, teammates and distraction from the game. Seek appropriate medical attention as needed.

Scott Ahrenholz, D.O., CAQ, provides non-surgical orthopedic care to people of all ages at Fairview Sports and Orthopedic Care located at Fairview Lakes Medical Center in Wyoming, Minn.. Dr. Ahrenholz is board certified in Pediatrics and earned a Certificate of Added Qualification in Sports Medicine. In addition to patient care, Dr. Ahrenholz provides medical coverage for area high school athletic teams and community sporting events including the Burnsville Safe Haven Heart of the City Half Marathon and the Chisago Lakes Triathlon.

Fairview Sports and Orthopedic Care, part of Fairview's family of orthopedic services, has clinics in Wyoming and Burnsville, Minnesota. Sports medicine physicians also provide care at Fairview Clinics throughout the Twin Cities metro.

Our team is trained to get you back to activities and sports as quickly and as safely as possible. Keeping you in motion. Learn more at fairview.org/fsoc.