



## *What is the Edina Football Association doing about head injuries?*

There is an increased emphasis on the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of head injuries. As parents ourselves, we're sure that all of you are appropriately concerned about the potential impact of head injuries sustained in all youth sports.

### ***How big is the problem?***

First, some facts. While no one questions the importance of diminishing the number of head injuries – and of properly identifying and treating those that do occur – there are misperceptions.

Youth football players are less likely to sustain injury than their high school, college, or professional counterparts because they are not as fast, big, or strong – they do not collide with the same force. However, youth football players **are** at an increased risk (relative to their older counterparts) for serious head trauma sustained as a result of “second impact” syndrome – a condition in which the brain swells rapidly as a result of a second traumatic impact sustained before the brain has healed from an earlier, initial trauma.<sup>1</sup>

Statistics demonstrate that perceptions regarding safety and youth football are not necessarily accurate:

- Basketball, for example, generates nearly twice the number of “emergency room injuries” as football.<sup>2</sup>
- A recent report shows that high school basketball players (88), track and field athletes(47), and soccer players (31) all sustained more fatalities over a twenty year period than football players (22) – and that nearly as many cheerleaders (21) died as football players.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For general information regarding the nature and risks of concussions associated with athletic activity, see: [www.cdc.gov/concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion).

<sup>2</sup> Source: July 2004 Consumer Product Safety Commission “Hazard Screening Report.”

<sup>3</sup> Source: National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research Twentieth Annual Report.

- Football is not the leading cause of head injuries amongst athletes 14 and under – cycling is, by nearly a two-to-one margin (40,272 to 21,878). Baseball (18,246), basketball (14,952) and soccer (8,392) also posed substantial risks.<sup>4</sup>

### ***What is the Edina Football Association doing in response?***

- 1) All EFA coaches are required to complete training.

The EFA requires all participating coaches and officials to receive online training from the “Concussion in Youth Sports online training program made available through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site.

- 2) Emergency Medical Technicians (“EMTs”) are present at all EFA tackle games.

The EFA retains EMTs to be present at every EFA tackle game played on its fields.

- 3) EFA Coaches and Officials are required to remove players who are suspected to have sustained a head injury.

EFA coaches and officials are required to remove players from participating in any game or practice when the player:

- Exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion; or
- Is suspected of having sustained a concussion.

- 4) Players who have been removed from competition may not return until they have been cleared by a medical professional.

When an EFA coach or official removes a player from a game or practice because of a concussion, the player may not participate in football again until:

- The player no longer exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion; and
- The player is evaluated by a provider trained and experienced in evaluating and managing concussions; and
- The medical provider gives the player written permission to return to football competition.

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<sup>4</sup> Source: 2010 American Association of Neurological Surgeons study.

***What can parents do to reduce the risk of head injuries – and insure proper identification and treatment when they do occur?***

1) Buy good, properly fitting equipment.

Good equipment is essential. The Edina Football Association requires that all players have helmets that meet the guidelines established by the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (“NOCSAE”).

Proper fit is also essential. Make sure that whoever sells your son equipment is qualified to make recommendations regarding fit. If you have any questions about new equipment, the manufacturer’s website will often include information and specifications regarding proper fit. USA Football also has an excellent video on fitting helmets.

Links:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2ytrV4moTk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2ytrV4moTk) (Rawlings)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgoS-jnmEJY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgoS-jnmEJY) (Schutt)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVM7XcXXrmE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVM7XcXXrmE) (USA Football/Riddell)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOkjVLCc4sQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOkjVLCc4sQ) (Xenith)

2) Insure that your son has a properly-fitting mouthguard – and that he wears it.

Properly fitting mouthguards help to protect against head injuries. Orthodontically-fitted mouthguards provide additional protection. The EFA encourages parents who would like to obtain a free, orthodontically-fitted mouthguard can contact Dr.D Orthodontics: [www.drdorthodontics.com](http://www.drdorthodontics.com)

3) Familiarize yourself with the symptoms of head injuries.

Parents are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the symptoms of head injuries at the Center for Disease Control’s website:

[www.cdc.gov/concussion/signs\\_symptoms](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/signs_symptoms)

- 4) Communicate with your son's coaches, and **immediately** seek medical assistance if you suspect that your son has sustained a head injury.

Coaches see players on the field but not in their homes – and, of course, you may not see your sons during practice (or sometimes even at games). So coaches and parents have to work together to attempt to insure player safety. If you suspect that your son sustained a head injury, please seek medical attention **immediately**.

- 5) Have a “baseline” cognitive test performed.

We also urge you to have your son perform a “baseline” cognitive test so that, in the event of a head injury, his doctor can better determine when your son is healthy and can return to athletics.

You can find a baseline “ImPact” tests at:

[www.gillettechildrens.org/default.cfm?PID=1.17.4.2.1](http://www.gillettechildrens.org/default.cfm?PID=1.17.4.2.1)

