



Overuse Injuries:

Overuse injuries are very common in young athletes. They usually occur from a combination of lack of stretching, rapid growth with muscles being tight due to long bone growth, and some lack of rest and recovery (over-training). There are certain overuse injuries that are classic in certain age groups. The most common ages for overuse injuries are 11-14 when kids are growing at a rapid rate and, therefore, putting muscle groups under tension. The most common body parts affected depends on the sports they play. Soccer players usually struggle with lower extremity overuse injuries, while tennis and baseball players struggle more with upper extremity injuries.

Most common overuse injuries include:

Osgood-Schlatter's Disease: this is an inflammation of the patella tendon attachment to the tibia (shin bone). The tell-tale sign is a "bump" or swollen area in the front of the knee. It is caused by a tight quadriceps/patellar tendon complex as the thigh bone grows longer and puts this muscle group under tension. The attachment has a growth plate underneath which gets irritated, inflamed and painful. Treatment is relative rest (playing beneath the pain level), anti-inflammatory medications, stretching, and ice.

Sever's Disease: this is an inflammation of the heel. Similarly, as the tibia (shin bone) grows longer, the calf muscle and Achilles tendon is under tension. There is a growth plate underneath the heel that the Achilles tendon attaches to and this area becomes very painful. An additional factor is the constant pounding this growth plate receives from running sports. Treatment is relative rest, heel cushions, stretching, anti-inflammatory medication, and ice.

Iliotibial Band Tendonitis: this is inflammation of the IT band that goes from the outside of the hip down the outside of the leg and attaches to the tibia at the knee. Young females frequently struggle with this as their hips get wider during puberty and the IT band is put under tension with an added element of tension from the thigh bone getting longer. Treatment is, as above, relative rest, stretching, anti-inflammatory medications and ice.

As coaches and parents, it is critical to do several basic things. First, a good dynamic stretching routine is essential before all training and games. Second, paying attention to kids who complain of pain and getting them evaluated by a doctor quickly to "nip the problem in the bud." Playing through the pain will only make it worse. A little time off and quick treatment will most likely get the athlete back to play pain free quicker. These problems can become chronic and necessitate a longer time off from their sport.