Overtraining in Young Athletes

While most coaches, parents and athletes tend to think of the term “overtraining” as a description of time spent on a specific activity it is actually much more. Overtraining syndrome (OTS) is a condition that can prevent athletes from reaching training and competitive goals, increase injury rates, and effect activities of daily living. Another closely related condition is Overreaching syndrome (ORS). This is a more subtle condition but one that can effect a young athletes health and wellbeing. Both overreaching and overtraining syndromes are difficult to accurately diagnose in the clinic setting due to the subjectivity of symptoms. However, they should not be overlooked in importance.

Overreaching Syndrome (ORS)

In today's sports environment of early sport specialization it is easy for a young athlete to fall victim to ORS. Common symptoms of ORS are fatigue, overuse injuries, decreased desire to compete or practice, decrease in athletic performance, and change in appetite. While most parents and coaches can agree that any of these symptoms may just sound like your normal teen or pre-teen, when combined they should be cause for further evaluation.
Most commonly athletes with ORS will exhibit the symptoms in a short span of time and with a fairly quick progression. The athlete will typically complain of fatigue first followed by one or more overuse injuries (tendonitis, shin splints, stress fractures, etc) occurring. Prior to the complaint of symptoms a decrease in performance is usually noted.

Treatment for ORS combines treatment for each symptom. Athletes should treat current injuries as directed by their physician while also incorporating rest, both from sport and increased rest in general. Usually rest is recommended for a minimum of two weeks. Prevention of ORS, however, is much more conducive to athletic success. It is recommended that young athletes participate in a variety of activities or training styles. If the athlete is specialized to one sport offer alternative training methods and styles as well as ample recovery time between training sessions as well as season. Athletes participating in multiple sports should also have ample recovery between seasons as well as limiting the number of sports per season.

Overtraining Syndrome (OTS)

If not assessed and treated ORS can escalate to OTS. It is also possible for athletes to present with OTS symptoms initially rather than progressing from one to the other. Symptoms of OTS are fatigue, multiple overuse injuries or severe overuse injuries, prolonged illness symptoms (upper respiratory infections most commonly), burnout, decreased athletic performance, mood changes and change in appetite and/or body weight.

An athlete with OTS generally will require longer periods of rest in order to recover. It is also recommended that an athlete diagnosed with OTS receive counseling to address burnout and stress issues related to the syndrome. Prevention of OTS is the same as its counterpart.

As today’s athletic world continues to promote sport specialization and increased training at younger and younger ages it is important to remember that young athletes can experience burnout and overtraining at younger ages as well. While an athlete health is a priority and requires some safe guarding it should be noted that OTS and ORS will also effect athlete performance and ability to compete.
Hip Pointers

A contusion over the iliac crest is commonly called a hip pointer. The mechanism of injury is a direct blow to the hip. The injury usually occurs in contact sports where there is no protective padding. This can be a very painful and debilitating injury, due to the fact that many abdominal and thigh muscles attach in this area that may get damaged.

Signs and symptoms of this injury are immediate pain and possible spasm of the trunk muscles. It will be painful for the athlete to do all trunk and hip motions. There will be bruising over the hip bone. This injury can be classified as mild, moderate and severe. If the athlete shows a normal gait, has good motion of the hip and trunk, and the swelling is limited the injury can be considered mild. Recovery time is one week. If the athlete shows an abnormal gait, decreased range of motion and noticeable bruising and swelling, the injury can be considered moderate. Recovery time can be up to two weeks. If the athlete shows severe pain while walking and hip and trunk movements are limited in addition to bruising and swelling, the injury can be considered severe. Recovery time can be three to four weeks.

Treatment for this injury is rest, anti-inflammatory medication, and ice therapy. If the athlete can not walk, the athlete needs to see a physician to have X-rays done to rule out an avulsion fracture. The athlete will also need to be placed on crutches. Doing range of motion exercise in a pool would be very helpful. When range of motion exercises become easier the athlete can progress to resistive exercises of the hip and trunk, such as four way hip with theraband or straight leg raises all three directions. The athlete should gradually work back into practices. When the athletes returns to their sporting activity make sure to pad the area for protection.

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Attention:

For those of you who would like to give your athlete(s) who have come back from a serious or unique injury some recognition for their hard work and perseverance, Don Joy is sponsoring a COMEBACK PLAYER OF THE MONTH. The athlete chosen will receive a plaque and an appearance on the Scholastic Ball Report shown on Saturday on WKYT. If you have an athlete(s) or know of one you would like to nominate, please contact Jenni Williams @ sjwill2@uky.edu for more information.
Save the Date

11th Annual UK Sports Medicine Symposium
Lexington, Kentucky
May 15-16th, 2009
Keynote speaker: C.T. Moorman, MD
Duke University Director of Sports Medicine

Embassy Suites
1801 Newtown Pike
Lexington, KY 40511
(859) 455-5000

More information coming soon

With our sports injury walk-in clinic, no appointment is necessary.

Walk-in at 7:30 - 9:00am.

We're located within Kentucky Clinic, with adjacent parking available.

Staffed by fellowship-trained sports medicine physicians.

Physical therapy and rehabilitation services are available.

We're proud to be the team physicians for all UK Athletics.

Call (859) 323-5533 for more information

Upcoming Events

February 19-21: KHSAA State Wrestling Tournament, Frankfort
March 11-14: KHSAA State Girls Basketball Tournament, Bowling Green
March 18-21: KHSAA State Boys Basketball Tournament, Lexington