

Knee injuries on the rise in child and adolescent athletes

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Sports-related knee injuries in children and adolescents seem to be increasing at an alarming rate. Researchers at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia noted a more than 400 percent increase in these injuries at their institution over the last decade, according to new research presented on Sunday, Oct. 16, at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) National Conference and Exhibition in Boston.

"While we are never going to prevent all injuries, there is good evidence, particularly for some sports like soccer, that sports injury prevention programs can go a long way towards reducing them," said Dr. Lawrence.

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

In "Knee Injuries In Children and Adolescents: Has There Been An Increase In ACL and Meniscus Tears In Recent Years?" researchers reviewed billing records of patients under age 18 treated for tibial spine fractures, ACL and meniscal tears, at a large academic children's hospital from 1999 through 2011. Over that time period, ACL tears increased by 11.35 injuries per year and meniscus tears increased by 13.95 injuries per year. However, tibial spine fractures, which are thought to be caused by a similar mechanism as ACL tears, only jumped by 1.07 injuries per year.

While the exact cause of this growth in sports-related [knee injuries](#) is unclear, increased diagnosis, earlier referral and more [aggressive treatment](#) may contribute to these rising numbers, according to the study abstract.

In addition, "the high-level, year-round, young-age specialized (sports) competition has been cited as one cause for the increase," said lead study author J. Todd Lawrence, MD, PhD.

"The implications of ACL tears and meniscus tears in children and adolescents are significantly greater than the same injuries in adults," said Dr. Lawrence.

Not only are reconstruction procedures complex, requiring a lengthy recovery, they can potentially impair growth. Many [young athletes](#) also return to high-level sports, placing them at high risk of re-injury.

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