

Heads up tackling program decreases concussion rates, say researchers

19 March 2017

Consistently using a tackling education program appears to help lessen youth football concussion severity and occurrence, say researchers presenting their work today at the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine's Specialty Day in San Diego, CA.

"Our study showed that the risk of a concussion in high school [football](#) athletes was 1.4 times lower from schools that utilized the Heads Up tackling education program than those who were not trained to utilize the techniques," said lead researcher, Ellen Shanley PhD, PT, OCS, Director, Athletic Injury Research, Prevention, and Education, SC Center for Effectiveness Research in Orthopedics.

Shanley and her colleagues monitored 2,514 [high school football](#) athletes during the 2015 season in Greenville area. Prior to the start of the pre-season football, at least one coach from 14 schools received the Heads Up training from USA Football. Ten schools utilized the standard training. Random monitoring to assess proper coaching technique and instruction was performed by the researchers at three different times during the season to ensure compliance. Athletic trainers at each school monitored and recorded injury information for all practices and games for all of the schools involved in the study. The primary providers for all the athletes (both [athletic trainers](#) and physicians) are also part of the same large health network that provides services and use the same concussion clearance standards for return to activity.

During the season, 117 concussion injuries were observed. Players on the Heads Up teams sustained 75 concussions compared with 45 from the non-Heads Up teams with a concussion rate of 4.1/100 players vs. 6.0 for non-Heads up members. In addition, the Heads Up group appeared to return to play 27% faster than the non-Heads Up group with 10.6 days lost vs. 15.3 days lost.

"The results of our study seem to suggest that possibly less severe concussions were occurring with the Heads Up group which could be a significant hurdle to learning about and preventing concussions in [youth football](#) and keeping kids active," said Shanley. "With this being the first paper to evaluate the impact of this type of training program on the incidence and recovery of [concussion](#), we hope to do additional research with a larger data pool to continue to build insights."

Provided by American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine

APA citation: Heads up tackling program decreases concussion rates, say researchers (2017, March 19) retrieved 1 May 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-03-tackling-decreases-concussion.html>

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