









SUPPORTING YOUR ATHLETE THROUGH INJURY

Injuries are an inevitable part of sport. As a parent or guardian, your role in helping your young person navigate injury is critical: not just for their physical recovery, but for their confidence and overall wellbeing. Here's how you can support them each step of the way.

	<h3>Prevention Starts at Home</h3> <p>While not all injuries can be prevented, a few key strategies can reduce the risk:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Monitor Their Training Load<p>If your child is juggling school, club, and other extracurriculars, they may be doing too much. Overuse injuries are common in busy young athletes. Be their advocate. Communicate with all Coaches and share your child's full training and competition commitments. This way you can help manage the training load.</p>2. Encourage Strength Work<p>Building general strength isn't just for performance, it helps protect joints and muscles from injury. For early teenage athletes, strength training might start with bodyweight movements and resistance bands, progressing to light weights as they grow and develop. When guided by a qualified coach, strength and conditioning coach, athletic trainer, or physical therapist, strength training can be safe and effective.</p>3. Fuel Their Body<p>Growing athletes, especially those aged 13-19, need extra food and fluids to support their training load and healthy development. Most athletes will need to be eating every 2-3 hours to meet the extra fuel demands of the body. Many athletes and parents don't fully understand the key factors of performance nutrition, so working with a sports dietician can make a big difference. Without the right fuel, an athlete risks injury, illness, or setbacks in their growth and development.</p>4. Prioritise Recovery - Especially Sleep<p>Recovery is when the body repairs and adapt, and sleep plays a key role. Aiming for 8-10 hours of quality sleep each night is key for growing athletes. Encourage a consistent bedtime routine that includes limiting screen time just before bed, but be mindful that athletes are often more alert in the evenings and will take more time to wind down after an evening training session. Well-rested athletes reduce the risk of injury and enhance their physical and mental performance.</p>
	<h3>Pain: When to Seek Help</h3> <p>Not all pain is just "growing pains" or normal soreness. Keep an eye out for these red flags:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pain lasting more than 1-2 weeks• Pain that worsens with activity, rather than improving as they warm up• Swelling, warmth, or other changes to the appearance of the injured area• Pain disrupting sleep or daily life• Recurring injuries in the same area, such as repeated ankle sprains or wrist pain• Any fevers associated with injury <p>Trust your instincts: if something doesn't feel right, rest and get it checked.</p>



	<h3>Rehab and Recovery: Stay the Course</h3> <p>Injury rehabilitation can be a long, lonely, and frustrating journey, especially when teammates are training and competing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● See it through. Rehab doesn't stop when the pain goes away. Encourage your child to complete their recovery plan fully to reduce re-injury risk.● Keep your child connected. Whether it's watching competitions, joining team meetings, attending social activities or helping with team gear – speak to the coach about small ways to initially keep your child connected to the team. Once your child is progressing, ask their doctor, physical therapist, athletic trainer, or coach what modified training your child can start engaging in (like warm-up, certain drills, recovery sessions).
	<h3>Mental Recovery Matters Too</h3> <p>Rehab isn't just physical: injuries can impact your child's confidence, mood, and connection to what they love. Supporting their mental and emotional well-being is just as important as following the rehab plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Talk about how they're feeling. Regularly check-in with your child about their emotions, frustrations, or fears. Let them know it's normal to have moments of feeling down or disconnected during recovery.● Foster a routine. Maintaining a consistent daily routine, even if it's different from their usual sports schedule, can provide structure, boost motivation, and support emotional and social well-being during recovery.● Consider extra support. If your child seems stuck, unmotivated, or unusually withdrawn from usual interactions or activities, a Sport Psychologist can provide helpful strategies and support to you and your child.
	<h3>Return to Sport: Don't Rush</h3> <p>It's tempting to go straight back to full training – but that's the fast track to re-injury.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Avoid the "zero to hero" trap. Going from no activity to full training can land your child back on the sidelines. Speak to the coach, doctor & support team about easing them back into the training environment with shorter, lighter, or modified sessions.● Unloaded athletes need reloading time. Bodies adapt to the load placed on them. Generally, the longer your child was off their chosen activity, the longer they will need to safely reload to their previous level.
	<h3>Who Can Help?</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Sports Physicians are doctors with additional specialist training & qualifications in sport injuries for youth and adults. There are various specialties of sports physicians such as orthopedic doctors, neurologists, and cardiologists.● Mental Performance Experts are typically Certified Mental Performance Consultants (CMPCs) or licensed Clinical Sport Psychologists who have specialized training and qualifications in sport performance, injury, and well-being. These professionals have the expertise to support athletes to regulate their emotions during rehabilitation, develop mental skills, and return to sport feeling competent and confidence.● Sports Dieticians are accredited dieticians with additional specialist training and qualifications



in sports nutrition and health. A sports dietician has the expertise to support athletes to support athletes with performance and health nutrition, helping them fuel properly for health, recovery, training, and performance.

- **Strength and Conditioning Coach or Exercise Physiologists** are accredited coaches or Exercise Physiologists that possess the knowledge and expertise to craft, execute and assess safe and effective strength and conditioning training or rehabilitation programs for athletes.
- **Physical Therapists** are licensed healthcare professionals who diagnose and treat patients of all ages to improve mobility, manage pain, and restore physical function, often avoiding surgery or long-term medication use.
- **Certified Athletic Trainers** are highly qualified, certified healthcare professionals who collaborate with physicians to prevent, diagnose, treat, and rehabilitate injuries and medical conditions in athletes. They provide on-site emergency care for both acute and chronic injuries.