

Pilot Study Finds an Estimated 1.4 million High School Sports Injuries in 2005-06

Identifies Participation, Injury Incidence, and Risk Factors in Nine High School Sports

COLUMBUS, OH, September 28, 2006 —

High school sports play an important role to help create a physically active lifestyle but also place student athletes at risk for injuries. During the 2005-06 school year, an estimated 1.4 million injuries occurred, more than 80% of them new according to a report issued today in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) MMWR.

Using an internet-based surveillance system to collect data on nine sports in 100 representative US high schools, researchers found that football had an injury rate almost two times higher than any other sport.

The pilot study was funded by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and led by Dawn Comstock, PhD, researcher at the Columbus Children's Research Institute Center for Injury Research and Policy at Columbus Children's Hospital and an Ohio State University College of Medicine faculty member.

As participation in high school athletics continues to increase, the number of high school athletes who sustain sports-related injuries will likely rise. There were 2.4 injuries per 1,000 athlete-exposures (athlete-exposure is defined as one athlete participating in one practice or game).

Comstock said, "Too often sports-related injuries are thought to be unavoidable when, in reality, such injuries are largely preventable through the application of preventive interventions based on science."

"We worked with certified athletic trainers (ATCs) to gather information about injury incidence and athletic exposure data for student athletes participating in nine sports (boys' football, boys' and girls' soccer, girls' volleyball, boys' and girls' basketball, boys' wrestling, boys' baseball, and girls' softball)," Comstock said.

Injury patterns varied by type of exposure; injuries such as concussions and fractures occurred more commonly in competition than practice.

While the numbers of injuries are similar in practice and competition, the rate of injury in competition is higher in every sport because there are fewer games than practices.

Knowing how many athletes play a sport and are injured is valuable information for researchers, public health officials, school administrators and athletic rules committees. According to CDC's Injury Center director, Dr. Ileana Arias, "This pilot study shows the value of a national system that lets us keep track of high school sports injuries. We want our kids to be physically active, but we also want to help them stay healthy and injury free. By identifying sports-related injury trends we will be able to identify the biggest problems and find ways to reduce those risks."

Researchers suggest that parents, coaches and athletes follow the National Athletic Trainers Association recommendations such as pre-participation physical exams and use of appropriate protective equipment in practice and competition.

CDC has developed a tool kit for coaches titled, Heads Up: Concussion in High School Sports. This kit contains practical, easy-to-use information including a video and DVD featuring a young athlete disabled by concussion, a guide, wallet card and clip board sticker for coaches, posters, fact sheets for parents and athletes in English and Spanish, and a CD-ROM with downloadable kit materials and additional concussion-related resources. For more information, please link to www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/Coaches_Tool_Kit.htm.

To read this MMWR, link to: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr>.

To learn more about Columbus Children's Research Institute Center for Injury Research and Policy at Columbus Children's Hospital, link to: <http://www.injurycenter.org>

For information about the National Athletic Trainers Association recommendations, link to www.nata.org/

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