

For Immediate Release

**Keeping Kids in the Game: Putting Shoulder and Knee Injuries on the Sidelines  
Dr. Kevin Plancher of Plancher Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine Shares Tips on  
How to Make Youth Sports Safer**

**New York, NY & Greenwich, CT, January 2018** – When it comes to kids and sports, the umpire’s game-starting “Play ball!” could use an add-on warning: “Just not too much!” “We want kids to reap the ongoing benefits of sports, emphasizes Dr. Kevin Plancher, orthopaedic surgeon and founder of Plancher Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine. That means we need to help them stay healthy by not overdoing it.”

According to the national Youth Sports Safety Alliance, more than 46 million young people play team sports. This statistic is good news. Sports involvement is linked to positive outcomes, including healthy lifestyle choices and higher levels of self-esteem and academic and professional success.

However, too many young athletes get hurt. In 2007, the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine spearheaded the formation of STOP (Sports Trauma and Overuse Prevention) Sports Injuries, generally report alarming statistics. In high-school sports, 2 million injuries a year; for those under the age of 14, 3.5 million treated annually.

Almost half of middle- and high-school injuries are due to overuse. “Meaning they’re inherently preventable,” observes Dr. Kevin Plancher, who in 2001 founded the not-for-profit Orthopaedic Foundation for Active Lifestyles, dedicated in part to preventing sports injuries. “Parents and guardians – as well as coaches – are fully informed so that kids can avoid getting hurt.”

Dr. Plancher’s specialties include knees and shoulders –particularly at risk in popular sports like basketball, football, soccer, baseball, and softball. “We can help young athletes protect their knees and shoulders from overuse,” he states Dr. Plancher suggests the following:

**5 Tips to Help Young Athletes Avoid Knee and Shoulder Injuries**

**1. Emphasize conditioning:** “Sports such as basketball, soccer, field hockey, lacrosse, and volleyball involve sudden jumps, stops, starts, and turns that are hard on the knees,” Dr. Plancher explains. Female athletes in particular are vulnerable to injuries to their knees’ anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) due to structural and hormonal factors. “Coaches and trainers need to dedicate time to strengthening the muscles around the knee, as well as to cultivating an awareness of supportive body positioning.” The American College of Sports Medicine offers examples of preventative exercises – and reports that such programs can reduce knee injuries by up to 50 percent.

“In terms of shoulders,” states Dr. Plancher, “baseball and softball cause extra stress. Research from the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine shows that pre-

season training programs can help young pitchers avoid injury.” Dr. Plancher stresses the importance of appropriate warm-up exercises and proper equipment for all sports.

**2. Take time off:** “Young athletes need rest,” Dr. Plancher observes. “Throwing sports like baseball and softball can cause serious shoulder injuries. Regarding pitching specifically, there is compelling research on over-pitching in terms of pitch count, frequency, type, and speed.” STOP Sports Injuries provides guidelines regarding age-appropriate pitching, including count, intensity, and frequency.

**3. Mix it up:** “Particularly in terms of knee injuries, young athletes benefit from doing different sports,” Dr. Plancher observes. “Not only does variety prevent burn out, it also forestalls overuse due to repetitive movement. Even within one sport, young athletes can benefit from cross-training, for example a swimmer who runs as part of an endurance program can mitigate the stress that swimming places on the shoulder joint.”

**4. Don’t play through the pain:** “We need to help young athletes listen to their bodies and seek prompt treatment,” says Dr. Plancher. “Providing early rest and rehabilitation is key to preventing more serious injury, as well as subsequent injuries.”

**5. Allow time to heal:** “Young athletes want to get back in action as soon as possible,” acknowledges Dr. Plancher, “so it’s up to the adults around them to make sure they have fully recovered.” Once injured, athletes are susceptible to re-injury, making pre-sport conditioning crucial.

Dr. Plancher emphasizes the importance of preventing injury among athletes. “Unfortunately, many young athletes quit sports early and as much as we want young people involved in sports, we want their involvement to be long term so that it can provide lasting benefits.”

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