

For Immediate Release

**Tips for an Injury-Free Soccer Season**  
***Dr. Kevin Plancher with Plancher Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine explains common high school soccer injuries and offers tips to avoid them***

**New York, NY & Greenwich, CT, September 2017** – A new school year means soccer season is well underway, with nearly a million American high school girls and boys participating in the world's most popular sport. But all of them – and especially girls, who are prone to season ending knee ACL tears – should take steps to prevent common injuries that can cut into their time on the field, according to orthopaedic surgeon Kevin D. Plancher, MD, founder of Plancher Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine.

Nearly 400,000 girls played high school soccer in 2015-16 in the United States, according to national figures, comprising about 40% of the total for both genders. Participation continues to climb each year, but so do injuries resulting from this rough-and-tumble sport. Tracking a nationally representative sample of 100 schools in the U.S., a March 2017 study in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* estimated that 3.38 million high school soccer injuries took place over the 10-year study period.

Boys and girls playing high school soccer suffered similarly increasing rates of concussion, but unfortunately girls sustained higher rates of ACL/MCL ligament sprains than boys, who were more likely to sustain fractures, the study found.

“This recent research shows that most injuries for boys and girls resulted in staying off the field less than a week, but nearly 7% resulted in waiting more than 3 weeks before returning to play,” Dr. Plancher noted. “The findings demonstrate exactly why preventing soccer injuries is so important in the first place.”

**Common high school soccer injuries – especially among girls**

What are the most common soccer injuries? Among both high school boys and girls, the list is topped by ligament sprains (nearly 30%), concussion (nearly 18%) and muscle strains (16%), the 2017 study found. Of the injuries resulting in a loss of play for 3 weeks or more, the 3 most common injuries among girls were knee sprains (26%), concussions (22%) and ankle sprains (13%). Among boys, these injuries included concussions (17.8%), knee sprains (15.5%) and ankle sprains (almost 9%).

Other typical soccer injuries among both genders, according to Dr. Plancher, include:

- Fractures
- Tendinitis
- Skin injuries such as cuts or lacerations
- Shin splints
- Wrist sprains and fractures (from falling on an outstretched arm)
- Shoulder dislocations
- Bruising
- Neck sprains

“Notably, the rate of ligament sprains requiring surgery was much higher in girls in the recent study than boys,” says Dr. Plancher, who lectures globally on issues related to orthopaedic procedures and sports injury management and takes care of professional athletes. “Prior research has already established that tears to the ACL, or anterior cruciate ligament, are 8 times higher in girls than boys.”

While several anatomical and hormonal factors seem to make females more prone to ACL tears, the most prominent include a wider pelvis, more lax ligaments, a smaller groove in the leg's femur bone, slower reflex time and landing with appropriate proprioception are some of the factors, he says.

**Tips to prevent soccer injuries**

Stopping soccer injuries before they happen is obviously preferable to treating them later. Dr. Plancher

offers these ways to try to avoid injuries on the soccer field:

- Proper conditioning: Conditioning-related injuries such as sprains and strains happen most frequently at the start of soccer season, before young athletes are fully in shape. To prevent them, follow a coach-sanctioned conditioning program that includes running and stretching. “Focus especially on building up the hamstring and inner quadriceps muscles on the thighs,” he says.
- Proper pivot and jumping techniques, which can help avoid ACL tears. These techniques include landing on flexed knees and avoiding abrupt stops and pivots. “Girls especially should practice these methods,” he says.
- Proper warm-ups and cool-downs: “Logically, cold muscles are more prone to injury, so spending the time to stretch each muscle group before and after play is crucial,” Dr. Plancher says.
- Wear shin guards and mouth guards
- Wear shoes designed specifically for soccer (typically molded cleats)
- Drink plenty of water before, during and after play

“Soccer is largely a safe sport, and while some injuries aren’t preventable, many are,” Dr. Plancher says. “Players should be educated about what they can do to avoid as many of these injuries from happening as possible.”

*Kevin D. Plancher, MD, is a board-certified orthopaedic surgeon and the founder of Plancher Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine.*

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