



How Young Athletes Can Prevent Injury, Build Strength—Safely!

Properly warming up, stretching and cooling down will help most athletes prevent serious injury, according to physical therapists at Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center of Lincoln.

“Most high school athletes do not spend the needed time warming up and stretching,” says John Linn, physical therapist.

Studies show that injuries are most likely to occur either at the beginning of a game or workout when muscles are cold and tight or at the end of an activity when they are fatigued. Beginning an activity at a very low intensity for a **warm up** and then **stretching** the specific muscles that will be used during the activity can lower the risk of sports injuries. Learning to listen to your body so that you stop exercising before complete exhaustion sets in will also decrease injury risk.

“Stretching helps prevent injury, especially pulled muscles. It also reduces soreness in muscles early on. Holding a stretch for 30 seconds will increase flexibility, where as a typical 10-second hold might warm you up a little, but it will not increase your flexibility. Athletes need to be flexible to a point to reduce injuries,” Linn says.

Building Strength, Lifting Weights

Properly lifting weights can build strength, however, some people believe that weight lifting is dangerous for younger athletes under age 13 or 14, says Darci Fanning, physical therapist at Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center.

For these young athletes, Fanning warned against aggressive conditioning. Appropriate conditioning for these younger competitors is defined as supervised and instructed weightlifting with higher reps and lower weights no more than two times per week or having a sporting activity no more than three times per week, either practice or play times. Rest days are important between preparation and participation events.

“The concern is that young athletes are still maturing in both bone and soft tissue. Their muscles, tendons, ligaments are not the same strength as adults,” Fanning says. “Pushing them aggressively toward weightlifting or high volume workouts at such a young age may lead to stress fractures, tendonitis of tendons, or general inflammation of joints and joint pain, because of the stresses on them,” Fanning says.

The staff Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center works with young athletes to safely build strength, speed and agility. The clinic offers a wide range of services including pre- and post-surgical therapy, general orthopaedics, sports rehabilitation, orthotics and aquatic physical therapy.

In all cases, Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center works closely with physicians to provide athletes the latest in enhancement and rehabilitation care. The center has two locations, 6900 “A” Street and 3901 Pine Lake Road. For more information, call: 436-2535 or check out www.midwestphysicaltherapy.com

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PHOTO CUTLINE: Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center, with two locations in Lincoln, help young athletes get faster, stronger and more agile. The staff of physical therapists and physical therapist assistants works closely with physicians to provide rehabilitation care to injured athletes.



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