

Evening the Odds

By Jennifer Willis
For The Scribe

Are girls more at risk for ACL injuries than boys?

A recent article in The New York Times Magazine — “The Uneven Playing Field,” by Michael Sokolove (May 11, 2008) — reports the incidence of ruptured ACLs may be as much as five times higher for young female athletes than for their male counterparts.

“There are absolutely more girls than boys getting hurt,” says Dr. J. Brad Butler, Orthopedic Surgeon and President of The Orthopedic and Fracture Clinic in Portland. Butler also coaches soccer and has three daughters playing.

“It’s a huge topic of concern,” he says.

Physiological differences between boys and girls — hormonal differences, body alignment factors, and development of muscle groups — spike at puberty and contribute to the higher incidence of ACL injuries. Researchers believe that with education, awareness and training, the odds of injury can be reduced.

Butler’s says ACL injuries fall into one of two categories.

The first, discussed in the NY Times Magazine piece, is landing mechanics.

“It’s how you land a jump,” Butler says. “I tell kids, you want to land quietly, really flex your trunk and drop your bottom down low, because that way the force is distributed through your whole body.”

The second category is core strength. Without it, Butler says, “you don’t control your body’s center of gravity over your feet well enough, so the knee rotates inward, and that’s how you tear the ACL.”

Eric Porter, a physical therapist assistant at Reid & Yates Physical Therapy, says women’s wider pelvises and increased valgus angle of the knee — coupled with less stable muscle recruitment patterns when female athletes are landing, cutting or decelerating — result in the knee not being supported when it needs it most.



Ashley Quay demonstrating a side plank. It is like a pushup on your side, touching the hips on the ground and then lifting them.

Photos by Kory Bell, Orthopedic and Fracture Clinic

“We see the same with even the younger kids,” Porter says. “Younger girls, in high school and right at puberty, are actually getting hurt at a higher rate than college female athletes are.”

The consequences of knee dam-

age aren’t just short-term rest and rehabilitation. Down the road, girls who injure their knees today face increased risk of developing arthritis and, in some cases, knee replacement.

Prevention can work

One solution to the prevalence of ACL injuries in young female athletes is the PEP (“Prevent injury and Enhance Performance”) program developed by the Santa Monica ACL Prevention Project. Designed as a warm-up before sports practice, PEP exercises focus on stretching, strengthening, plyometrics, posture and agility to address strength and coordination of the stabilizing muscles around the knee joint.

Some researchers, doctors and coaches look favorably on the program, but others are con-

cerned the time commitment is prohibitive.

Nigel Chaumeton coaches the Pumas, a Youth 13 girls team in the Mt. Tabor Soccer Club.

“It takes between 15 and 25 minutes to follow the whole protocol,” Chaumeton says. “When we’re talking about maybe an hour-and-a-half practice, that’s a lot of time to spend on any one thing.”

Chaumeton, who has a Ph.D in exercise and movement science, modifies the PEP program so it takes less time. He leads his team through a dynamic warm-up, concentrating on jumping, landing with knees and toes in alignment and lunges — all the while reinforcing the physical form the girls should be striving to achieve.

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Hamstring curls on an exercise ball.



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Front view of good jump landing mechanics showing the trunk flexed and the rear end low.

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“Other than that,” he says, “I’m keeping my fingers crossed that nobody gets hurt during games.”

Something is better than nothing

Butler and his colleagues are trying to develop a more stripped down version of the PEP program that emphasizes the high points of prevention while also fitting easily into a regular team practice.

“The hard thing is, you have to decide what you’re willing to invest from a prevention standpoint,” he says.

Butler recommends hip strengthening exercises like the lateral plank — lying on your side and raising your hips off the ground — and single-leg hops done in front of a mirror to check that the hip, knee and ankle stay in a straight line.

“You work on strengthening the abdominal muscles and the hips, so that when you get in that awkward position, you have the power to keep the knee from rolling in the first place,” Butler says.

Other exercises involve using a basketball or soccer ball and these really appeal to young athletes.

Butler has taken this modified

prevention program to youth soccer teams.

“When we honed it down to about four different exercises, those were the ones you could get people to do,” he says. “It would only take about five minutes, and it would count as their warm-up. But you’ve got to learn how to do it right.”

Whether you’ve got five minutes or 25 for prevention, the facts are

the same: Girls are more at risk, but with proper warm-ups and training, many of these injuries can be prevented.

To find out more about the ACL prevention Project and PEP program, produced by the Santa Monica Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Group, visit www.aclprevent.com/pepprogram.htm.



Single leg squat keeping the pelvis level and the hip, knee and ankle in a straight line

Office manager meeting will focus on customer service

Portland Medical Community Managers annual meeting and workshop will be held June 12 and will focus on customer service in medical offices.

The workshop will focus on how to create and manage a work environment where staff provide outstanding customer service - to a variety of customers. The workshop will be held from 8:30a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Oregon Medical Association offices, 11740 SW 68th Parkway in Tigard.

Topics will include:

- The manager’s role in creating a culture with a commitment to service
- Management practices that increase customer service
- Defining the level of service: what does it look like, and from whose perspective?
- Setting the limits of service: should your staff

always meet customers’ demands?

- Assessing your clinic’s current service level
- Can you train staff to provide better customer service?
- The impact of hiring practices on customer service

Arty Trost, a nationally recognized consultant, trainer and keynote speaker who specializes in leadership development, team building, and performance management, will be a presenter at the workshop.

She is known for her ability to help clients find their own solutions, as well as the high level of energy, enthusiasm and curiosity she brings to her work.

The cost of the workshop is \$129 for members and \$149 for guests.

To register, contact Dianne Price at 503-601-4870.

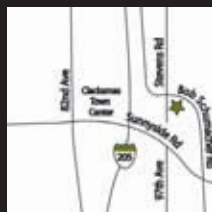


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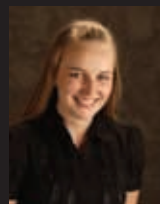
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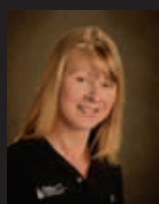
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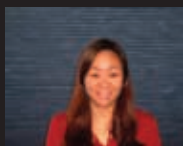
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