



ACL Injury Prevention Program

ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) injuries of the knee are no longer seen only in adults. More and more teenage athletes are showing up in the emergency rooms with torn ACLs.

The ACL, along with the PCL (posterior cruciate ligament) is one of the major ligaments that help stabilize the knee joint. The ACL is most often stretched, or torn by a sudden twisting motion while the feet remain planted. The majority of ACL injuries occur when an athlete misses a landing from a jump, pivots quickly while changing direction, or decelerates abruptly. These movements may cause the ACL to stretch to the point of tearing.



There's a growing number of ACL injuries in young athletes who play sports such as soccer, basketball and volleyball. Physicians speculate that part of the reason for the increase in ACL injuries may be related to the year-round sports training that many teens are doing. Playing sports constantly with no time off, playing multiple sports or playing field and court sports that emphasize quick starts, stops, and pivots makes teen athletes more susceptible to ACL tears. The risk is particularly high among athletes who play soccer, football, volleyball, or basketball.

However, teens who participate in ACL prevention programs may greatly reduce their risk of an injury. These prevention programs are becoming more popular in youth sports and generally include exercises to help strengthen muscles and improve faulty movement patterns in teens. Multiple studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of ACL injury prevention programs.

These prevention programs are made up of training drills that emphasize balance, power and agility. Plyometric exercises and balance drills help improve neuromuscular conditioning and reaction time and may decrease the risk of ACL injury. Many coaches use an ACL conditioning program as a basic part of sports practice.

