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Preventing Football Injuries

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With Thanksgiving high school football games just around the corner, now is the perfect time to make sure your kids remain injury-free while having fun on the field.

According to SafeUSA™, more than 150,000 football players under the age of 15 seek treatment for injuries in hospital emergency rooms each year. Mark E. Pruzansky, MD, director of the Manhattan-based [HandSport Surgery Institute](#) [1], and a pioneer in the field of hand and upper extremity surgery and sports injuries, says, "Like with any other contact sport, playing football involves a risk of getting hurt. However, teaching kids the proper form and technique goes a long way in preventing serious injury to the hands, wrists, elbows, and shoulders."

Dr. Pruzansky says that many of the injuries he sees occur not only from contact, but also from deviation from the correct form and technique needed to safely play each position. Each player should be taught movement and skills at a level appropriate for his or her stage of development and should also wear protective gear - such as elbow pads, tape on the fingers and wrists, forearm pads, and gloves - in order to reduce the possibility of injuries to the upper extremity.

Dr. Pruzansky also suggests that young players work on improving their coordination and reflexes in order to improve their game and avoid getting hurt. While children should only do limited lifting exercises, practicing drills appropriate for the position they play and trying out plyometric and jumping exercises to increase strength, speed and coordination are great ways to improve on the field.

If your child does get hurt and you see swelling in the hands, wrists, elbows, or shoulders, or your child feels pain that lasts into the following day, you should consult a hand and upper extremity expert immediately to diagnose the problem and shorten recovery time. Additionally, since many football injuries in the upper extremity can be linked to weakness lower in the body, consulting an upper extremity expert with detailed knowledge of the body's kinetic chain - or the way that energy is transferred from one "link" of the body to the next - can be especially helpful in arriving at an accurate diagnosis and treatment plan.

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