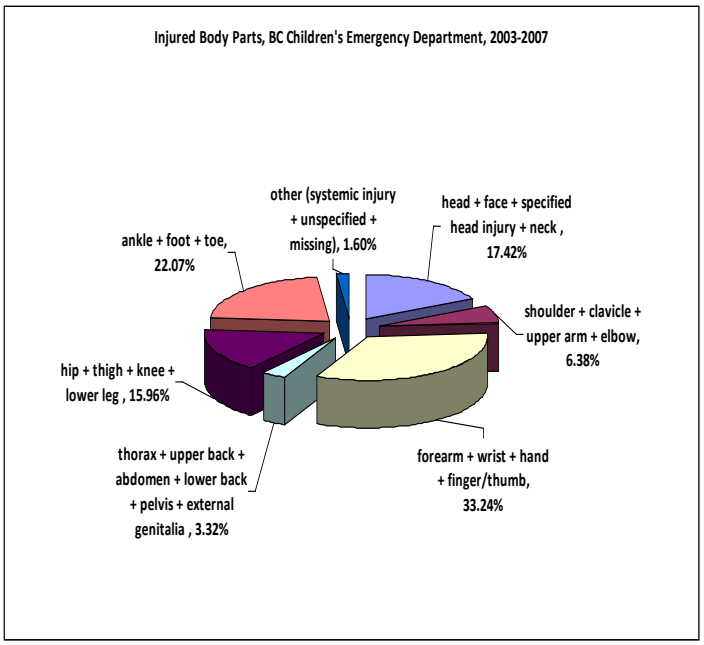
PREVENTING SOCCER INJURIES

Did you know...?

- Although a major underestimation, there are approximately 160 soccer injuries across all ages, that require hospitalization in BC each year (BCIRPU, 2009)
- From 2003-2007, there were over 750 soccer injuries seen at the BC Children's Emergency Department (CHIRPP, 2009)
  - 65% were males (contradictory to many other sources that state that females are twice as likely as males to incur soccer injuries)
  - 10-14 year olds represent over 58% of cases
  - Most soccer injuries tend to occur on sports fields (37.5%)
- The Canadian Soccer Association recommends that young children should not be taught how to 'head the ball' until the age of 9 or 10

Soccer Injuries among Children and Youth



How can soccer injuries be prevented?

For the athlete:

- Take time to warm up and cool-down for practices and games
- Be aware of your limits. Pushing too hard can increase risks for injury. Consult a medical professional before returning to play post injury
- Learn and follow the correct techniques (e.g., proper technique for heading the ball)
- Wear the proper gear and make sure it fits properly (e.g., shin guards, footwear, and padding)
- Wear appropriate shoes. Adults should use well-fitted cleats, which should be light and flexible
- Wear shin guards (for shock absorption, and blows to the shin)
- Consider padding for shoulders, elbows and hips.
- Mouth guard use could reduce the risk of injuries to the teeth and mouth and may reduce the risk of concussion due to blows to the jaw
- Consider the use of soccer headgear. Recent research shows that different types of headgear can reduce forces from head to head; foot; ball; ground; and post contact
- According to FIFA's position statement on noncompulsory equipment, modern protective equipment such as headgear, facemasks, knee and arm protectors made of soft, lightweight, padded material are not considered dangerous and are permitted

BC INJURY research and prevention unit

For more information, visit us at
www.injuryresearch.bc.ca

For the parent:

- If your child is sick or injured, it's a good time to take a break from sports and exercise. By returning too fast, there is a strong risk of re-injury
- Educate yourself about soccer safety. This will help you to recognize how injuries occur, and how you can help prevent them
- If an injury occurs, ensure appropriate medical assessment. Every concussed player must be assessed by a doctor
- Always make sure that your child is wearing the appropriate equipment; that it fits properly and is in good condition
- Teach your child about respect by being a good role model. Cheer positively and show respect and support to players, coaches, and referees

For the coach/trainers:

- The soccer ball should be the appropriate size for the specific age groups who are playing
- Check to see that the playing surface is in good condition
- Ensure goals posts are properly secured
- Padding the upright parts of the goal posts has been shown to reduce injuries due to goal post contact, but can alter the size of the goal
- Make sure that your players are prepared! Ensure that they have what they need to play in both cool and hot climates, including sufficient water
- Use simple teaching techniques to help your players learn. Encourage skill development through simple activities and games
- Never let a player on the field unless he/she is wearing the appropriate equipment and that the equipment fits properly and is in good condition
- Have a basic First Aid kit available
- It is highly recommended that coaches/trainers obtain a First Aid Certificate and maintain accreditation

For the physician:

- Physicians should explain the rationale and emphasize the need for immediate reporting of concussion (Kirkwood et al., 2006)
- Tracking the athlete's recovery over time (do not just base treatment on the initial 'grade' of the concussion) (Kirkwood et al., 2006)

Successful programs include:

- Stretching and strengthening to prevent shoulder injuries (Kluemper et al., 2006)
- Target interventions to males, 10-14 years of age, and the reduction of head injuries due to playing and informal sports (Josse et al., 2009)
- Correct instruction by coaches and teachers (Young et al., 2007)
- Beginning early and devoting attention to concussion education when the athlete is young (Kirkwood et al., 2006)
- Proper training and a staged approach in how to head the ball may reduce injuries (ThinkFirst, 2006)
- Athletes should participate in a year-round conditioning program to improve and maintain strength, flexibility and endurance (ThinkFirst, 2006)
- Prevention of over-training (ThinkFirst, 2006)
- Engaging in cross-training (ThinkFirst, 2006)

Useful Resources

- **British Columbia Soccer Association (http://www.bcsoccer.net/bcsa/)**
- **Coaches Association of BC (http://www.coaches.bc.ca/)**
- **Canadian Soccer Association (http://www.canadasoccer.com/)**
- **Brain Injury Association of Canada (http://biac-aclc.ca/en/)**
- **BrainTrust Canada (http://www.braintrustcanada.com/)**
- **BrainTrust Canada – Protect Your Head (http://www.protectyourhead.com/)**
- **Dr. Tom Pashby Sports Safety Fund (http://www.drpashby.ca/)**
- **ThinkFirst Foundation of Canada (http://www.thinkfirst.ca/)**
- **BC Recreation and Parks Association (http://www.bcrpa.bc.ca/)**
- **SportBC (http://www.sport.bc.ca/)**
- **SportMed BC (http://www.sportmedbc.com/)**
- **BC Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport (http://www.gov.bc.ca/hls/)**