



ACPed's Parent Talk

Keeping parents up to date on the latest news in child and teen health

Preparing for spring sports and preventing injury

As we are well into spring, many of our kids and teens are participating in spring sports such as baseball, golf, lacrosse, soccer, softball, tennis, and track and field



While sports are a great and healthful way for kids and teens to get outside and get physical, meet friends and spend their time constructively instead of glued to their cell phones, TVs and computer screens, there are some words of advice and caution to consider.

Concussions

According to recent [research](#) (1), **40% of all concussions experienced by school age children (aged 5-18) were from contact sports** including football, soccer, basketball, and hockey, **and from 30% were from limited contact or noncontact sports and recreation activities** like playing on the playground, participating in recess or gym at school, and riding bicycles, skateboards, skates, or hover boards.

All types of TBI can seriously affect a child's daily life.



Brain injury can cause problems with speaking or understanding, movement or mobility, thinking or memory, and personality or mood.

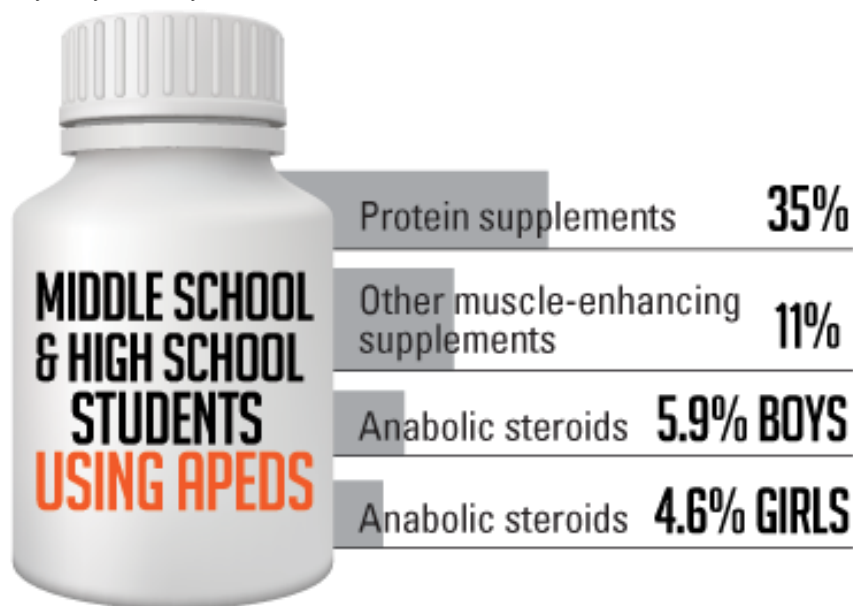
Research (2) also shows that **soccer has the highest rate of concussions among female athletes compared to any sport**. In fact, **studies** (3) show that **concussions now account for more injuries in girls' soccer than boys' football** because players who use their heads to hit a lot of balls (an average of 125 over two weeks) were three times more vulnerable to concussion than those who headed less than four in that time period.

Sports Drinks

Many child and teen athletes swear by sports drinks, seeing them as the first pick for hydration over water when playing sports or engaging in intense physical activity. However, **research** (4) has found that **a simple banana (paired with water) is better and more healthful than a sports drink**. The study found that bananas work as well as sports drinks to fuel athletes and help them recover after exertion and they help reduce pain and swelling.

Dietary Supplements

Too many teens think they need supplements to be the best they can be at sports but **research** (5) shows not only are dietary supplements unnecessary for most individuals, they may actually **increase the risk of illness, cancer and death**.



(6)

Appearance and Performance Enhancing Drugs (APEDS) are **not regulated by the FDA** so they can contain unhealthy ingredients and banned substances that can **affect testosterone and growth hormone levels**. They can also contain stimulants (e.g., caffeine, ephedra or synephrine) that can lead to **anxiety, racing heart or an irregular heartbeat**.

Words of Advice

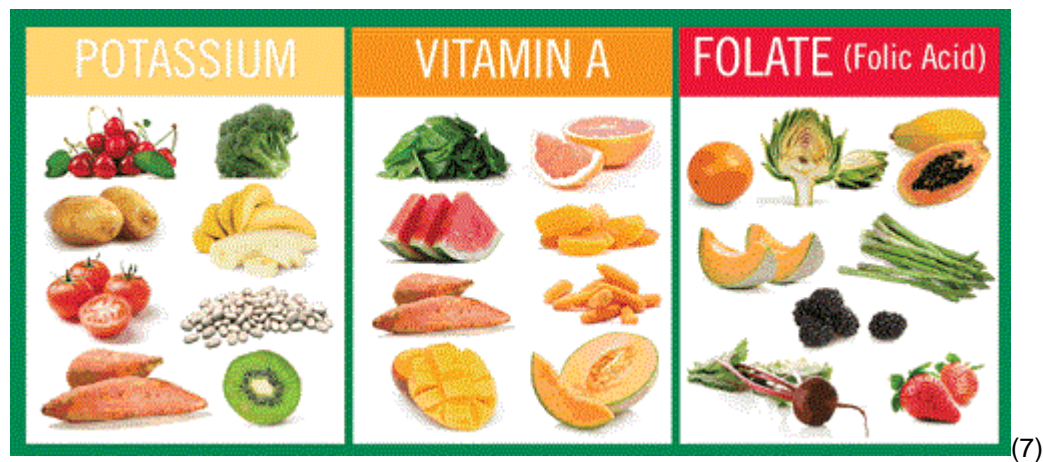
Ensure that your kids and teens always wear appropriate protective gear, especially helmets, when participating in sports and recreational activities. Soccer players don't wear helmets so advise your kids, boys and girls, against "heading" (or using their head to hit the ball) for their own safety and mental health's sake.



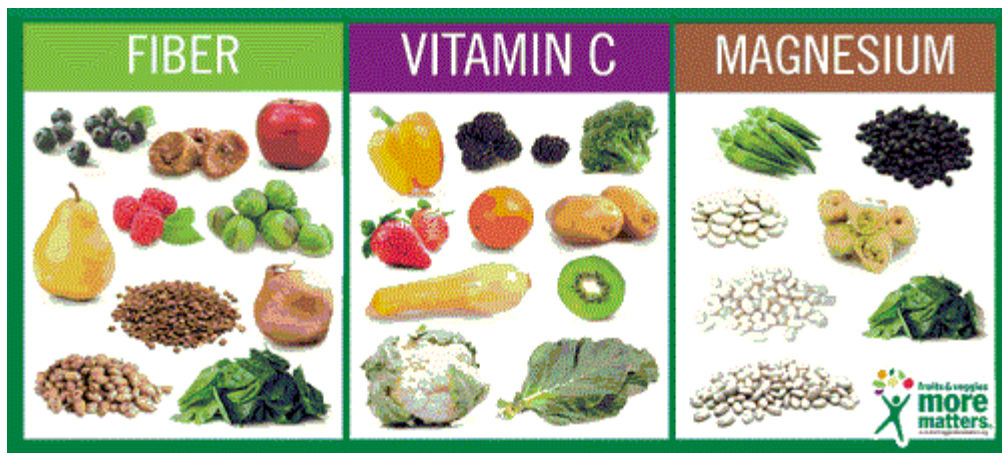
When biking, skateboarding, and rollerblading, discourage your children from practicing tricks alone or with other kids until they have perfected the tricks by practicing in the presence of a coach or experienced professional.

Make sure your kids always have access to water when participating in sports.

Get them a nice, reusable water bottle they'll want to carry with them wherever they go so you can be sure they are staying adequately hydrated.



Instead of supplements, encourage your kids and teens to carry portable snacks like fruits, vegetables, and nuts when they are going out to play, whether on a team sport, at the playground or just to go biking with friends. Apples, carrots, sweet peppers, grape tomatoes, bananas, oranges, almonds, walnuts and even packaged trail mix are good portable snacks that can be eaten raw and that don't need to be refrigerated.



(8)

If your child or teen does get injured, instruct them to stop what they are doing and call you right away.

Make sure that you let their friends and/or coaches know to do the same. Too often, teenagers hide or underestimate their injuries so that they can continue to participate and [research](#) (9) suggests that **boys are 4-11 times less likely than girls to report concussions because they don't want to seem weak or anger their coach and teammates.**

Let your child know that their long-term physical and mental health is more important than a short-term victory.

For more information

- [Young Children and Sports](#) (10) - ACPeds Blog post
- [Families affect Traumatic Brain Injury \(TBI\) recovery](#) (11) - ACPeds Parent Talk (2nd article)
- [Outdated concussion advice puts children at risk](#) (12) - ACPeds Parent Talk (1st article)



Don't hesitate to contact us with your questions and comments. We look forward to hearing from you.

www.acpeds.org

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1. <http://files.constantcontact.com/6c7b7138001/9d5c7db1-e7e8-4448-8327-f6d7835205f7.pdf?ver=1524147605000>
2. <http://files.constantcontact.com/6c7b7138001/9d5c7db1-e7e8-4448-8327-f6d7835205f7.pdf?ver=1524147605000>

3. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/02/01/512848122/with-concussion-risk-in-soccer-headers-may-kick-it-up-a-notch>
4. <https://today.appstate.edu/2018/03/27/banana>
5. <http://www.coloradocancerblogs.org/dietary-supplements-shown-to-increase-cancer-risk/>
6. <http://taylorhooton.org/dietary-supplements/>
7. <https://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/key-nutrients-in-fruits-and-vegetables>
8. <https://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/key-nutrients-in-fruits-and-vegetables>
9. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-concussion-high-school/high-school-boys-fear-looking-weak-if-they-report-concussions-idUSKBN18T2RR>
10. <https://www.acpeds.org/young-children-and-sports>
11. http://myemail.constantcontact.com/Predicting-Teen-Drug-Use--Recovering-from-TBI---the-Importance-of-Innocence.html?soid=1101710997446&aid=b-BL6fim5_I
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