

# Surge in ER visits for injuries, concussions from soccer

By Lindsey Tanner, Associated Press on 09.23.16

Word Count **565**



In this September 24, 2014, file photo, students compete in a high school soccer game in Burgaw, North Carolina. A study released September 11, 2016, found that soccer injuries are sending increasing numbers of U.S. youth to emergency rooms, a trend driven partly by young players with concussions seeking urgent medical care. Photo: AP Photo/Wilmington Star-News, Mike Spence

CHICAGO, Ill. — Soccer injuries are sending soaring numbers of U.S. kids to emergency rooms, a trend driven in part by young players with concussions seeking urgent medical care, a study has found.

The findings, based on 25 years of data, partly reflect soccer's growing popularity. But the researchers and sports medicine experts believe the trend also is a result of greater awareness about concussions and their potential risks. Coaches and parents are likely seeking emergency treatment for symptoms that in previous years might have been downplayed or overlooked.

Nearly 3 million players aged 7 through 17 received ER treatment for soccer-related injuries in the 2000-2014 study. The overall rate of injuries, which takes into account soccer's rising popularity, more than doubled to 220 per 10,000 players in 2013, from 106 per 10,000 players in 1990. Researchers did not have enough data to calculate 2014 rates.

More than 200,000 concussions or head injuries were treated in emergency rooms, or 7 percent of injuries. The rate jumped to almost 30 per 10,000 people in 2013 from just under 2 per 10,000 players in 1990.

That trend underscores a need for better safety education and injury prevention in youth soccer, said Dr. Huiyun Xiang, the lead author and a researcher at the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio.

"Concussions can have significant consequences in terms of cognitive function and brain development," Xiang said.

His study is an analysis of data from a national injury surveillance system and was published Monday in *Pediatrics*.

According to U.S. Youth Soccer, there were more than 3 million registered soccer players younger than 19 in 2014, almost twice as many as in 1990.

The rate of injuries from playing soccer has ranked second behind football in other studies on youth sports, including an analysis of 2015-2016 data from Reporting Information Online, an internet-based injury surveillance system for high school sports.

For boys, football-related concussions result in more ER visits than other sports, according to previous research. For girls, it's soccer, according to an analysis of 2001-2012 data by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The current study lacks information on gender-specific soccer injury rates.

Sprains and fractures were the most common injuries; most players were not hospitalized. Falling and getting hit by another player or the ball were among leading causes of injury, but there's no data in the study on whether many injuries were from heading the ball.

Concern about kids' injuries from heading led to the U.S. Soccer Federation's recent restrictions including a ban for kids 10 and younger and limits on heading for those 11-13.

Many concussions in soccer occur when heads collide as two players jump up to head the ball, said Dr. Cynthia LaBella, a sport medicine specialist at Chicago's Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital in Illinois. She said learning proper technique including tensing neck muscles can help kids avoid injury while heading the ball.

LaBella noted that soccer has become so popular that it attracts kids with a wide range of athletic ability, and that many injuries she treats are in kids who lack adequate strength and conditioning for their soccer level.

"Everyone's so eager to join the soccer team. They're signing up because they want to be with their buddies," she said. "The range of athleticism especially at the youth and preteen level is pretty broad."

## Quiz

- 1 According to the article, each of the following has contributed to an increasing amount of players seeking treatment for soccer injuries EXCEPT:
- (A) a greater awareness of the danger of head injuries
  - (B) a law requiring immediate treatment for injuries
  - (C) a larger number of kids who are playing soccer
  - (D) a need for safety education and injury prevention
- 2 Which of the following statements BEST represents Dr. Cynthia LaBella's reasoning for the increase in soccer-related injuries?
- (A) Many players have not learned the proper methods for avoiding injury at their soccer level.
  - (B) Many soccer players are playing at a level that is too low for their soccer abilities.
  - (C) Too many soccer players are purposely colliding with each other to get to the ball.
  - (D) An increasing number of soccer players prefer to use techniques like heading the ball.

- 3 Read the first sentence of the article:

*Soccer injuries are sending soaring numbers of U.S. kids to emergency rooms, a trend driven in part by young players with concussions seeking urgent medical care, a study has found.*

What is conveyed by the verb "soaring" in this sentence?

- (A) a sense of the change in the types of injuries being seen
- (B) a sense of how high and fast the number of injuries is rising
- (C) a sense that the number of soccer injuries will soon decrease
- (D) a sense that the kinds of injuries are more serious than before

4 Read the conclusion of the article.

*LaBella noted that soccer has become so popular that it attracts kids with a wide range of athletic ability, and that many injuries she treats are in kids who lack adequate strength and conditioning for their soccer level.*

Which pair of words could replace the words "adequate" and "conditioning" in the sentence above?

- (A) enormous; practice
- (B) extra; softness
- (C) special; concern
- (D) necessary; training