

## When is an injury REALLY an injury?

Many kids come home from practice sore and tired and complaining of aches and pains. When should you be concerned that there is more than some exertional discomfort and delayed muscle soreness?

### Basic steps to make that decision:

- **Do they respond to basic first aid?**
  - Ice – 20 min every 2 hours
  - Compression – ace wrap over swollen areas – take off at night
  - Elevation for lower extremity injuries above the level of the heart.
  - Relative rest – modify practice to avoid the exercises/activities that aggravate the area.
  - Slowly work back to full activity – jog – run – sprint – jump – cut etc.
- **Are they not willing to put weight on the area after 24-48 hours?**
  - Do the symptoms worsen over this time frame?
  - An ankle sprain for adults can be an ankle or foot fracture in kids.
- **Was the pain a result of a direct blow/twist/fall etc. (acute injury)**
  - Are they unwilling to use the part?
  - Are they obviously favoring that body part? This can cause improper compensation of other body parts.
- **Has the pain been there for a long time? (chronic injury)**
  - Overuse pain sequence:
    - Pain after activity
    - Pain during and after activity
    - Pain before, during and after activity
  - An injury that progresses along this pain sequence indicates a more severe injury
- **Are they growing Pains?**
  - Muscles have to stretch in response to the growing bones and this can often cause pain
  - Often flexibility and core exercises can make a big difference

### When can they return to play?

- Return to play is based on the functional status of the injury.
  - Can they walk – jog – run – cut – repetitively without an increase in swelling or pain?
  - Can they perform their sports skill repetitively without a limp or altered mechanics?
  - Are they anxious to get back to practice?

*Consult your primary care physician for more serious injuries that do not respond to basic first aid. As an added resource, the staff at **Children's Sports Medicine** is available to diagnose and treat sports-related injuries for youth and adolescent athletes. To make an appointment, call **402-955-PLAY (7529)**.*