

A B C D E F G H Children's Health

Parents: Don't Let Kids Play With Pain

(NAPSA)—Parents and coaches should think twice before coaxing young children and adolescents to “play through” foot and ankle pain.

Playing with pain is risky. It can lead to chronic and painful foot and ankle conditions and downstream problems with the knees and lower back.

To help avoid injuries, the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons suggests parents should follow these simple tips:

1. Get your child the right shoes for the right sport.
2. Never let a child wear hand-me-down shoes, despite the cost savings.
3. Buy athletic shoes that are well constructed and don't bend in the middle of the sole.
4. Never let your child wear cleated shoes on surfaces other than playing fields.
5. Be sure the level of competition is within the child's ability and overall stamina.
6. Help overweight children lose excess pounds. Being too heavy can put added pressure on the feet.

A common overuse injury affects the growth plate located at the back of the heel. Bone is still developing there, making cartilage vulnerable to severe inflammation from strain or stress. This induces heel pain.

“Their growth plates are still open and bones are growing and maturing—until they're about 13



Experts say getting a child the right shoes for the right sport can help prevent injuries.

to 16. Rest and, in some cases, immobilization of the foot should relieve that inflammation,” said Christopher Hendrix, DPM, FACFAS, a Memphis-based foot and ankle surgeon.

Active children are also susceptible to stress fractures—tiny hairline breaks caused by excessive force from running or jumping. Symptoms include pain during normal activity and when touching the area, as well as swelling without bruising.

Parents should be concerned if a child has pain in the back or bottom of the heel, limps, walks on the toes, or seems to have difficulty participating in normal recreational activities.

For further information about various foot conditions or to locate a podiatric surgeon, visit the Web site at www.FootPhysicians.com.