

You're spending your nights standing on the sidelines, cheering your daughter as she dribbles a soccer ball across the field. Or maybe you're cheering on your quarterback son as he yells "hut" at a football scrimmage. The school year - and its associated sports - is an exciting time. But with that excitement comes the risk of traumatic injuries - including concussions.

Concussions are generating a lot of attention these days as an increasing amount of research highlights the difficulties in treating them.

To this end, the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) has developed Sports Concussion Guidelines - available in both English and Spanish - to help coaches, schools, parents and athletes better understand concussions, and when an injured athlete should be allowed to return to play. The guidelines cover the following:

Players: Concussions can happen in any sport and at any time during the season. A concussion can occur when the head hits, or is hit by, a solid surface. It can also happen when the head's motion is stopped suddenly, even if it doesn't strike, or is struck by, a solid surface. If you witness changes in the behavior or personality of a player on your team, or if you see them giving a blank stare, acting disoriented, suffering from memory loss or even vomiting, ask the player if he/she was involved in a collision. Alert your coach if you witness or are involved in any violent contact while on the field.

Parents: Educate yourselves about the signs of a concussion, as you know your child best when he/she might be exhibiting unusual behaviors. Download the AAN's concussion reference sheet for parents, coaches and players at AAN.com/concussion, and share with your young athlete your concerns about him/her playing with a head injury. While cheering for your child in practice and in games, keep an eye on the play for any potential head collisions and report anything significant that may have been missed.

Coaches: Have a conversation with your players early in the season about the dangers of concussions, and communicate clearly that they can happen in any sport at any time. The AAN offers a Concussion Quick Check mobile app to help coaches, parents, and athletic trainers quickly identify if a player is exhibiting signs of a concussion. Additionally, listen to your players if they are talking about someone having taken a hard hit. Enforce the rule that players should not be allowed to return to play following a head injury until they are evaluated and cleared by a physician.

Physicians: Concussions are also generating more attention in the medical field. Physicians are ethically obligated to safeguard the current and future physical and mental health of the student athletes they treat, whether the student has a concussion or not. This includes providing parents and athletes with information about concussion risk factors, symptoms and discussing the potential for long term brain health effects from repeated blows.

"Brain disease threatens to steal from us what makes us human," says retired NFL player Ben Utecht, who suffered five known concussions during his football career and

is now the spokesperson for the American Academy of Neurology and its foundation, the American Brain Foundation. "I will fight relentlessly to see that through research we can in fact find the origins of healing through the cures that are waiting to be discovered." (BPT)

Sports concussions generate attention with start of school year



Call for 2014/2015 Souhegan High School Robotics Team Mentors

The Souhegan High School FIRST Robotics team is in urgent need of mechanical designers and software mentors for the 2014/2015 season. The team requires mechanical design and assembly mentors to transform a FIRST provided kit of parts into a 120 lb. competition robot. The team uses AutoDesk Inventor or Solidworks CAD tools to design the robot. The software team uses the C++ programming language to build a robot software program utilizing the vast array of functional elements from the WPI robotics library.

"For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology" (FIRST) was founded by entrepreneur & inventor Dean Kamen in 1989 to inspire students to pursue careers in engineering and the sciences. "If we expect to remain the world leader, we must put more emphasis into mathematics and science at the high school level." The FIRST robotics program enables high school students work hand-in-hand with professional engineers & scientists in solving a unique engineering challenge. The FIRST robotics program uses the excitement of a sporting competition to expose students to the intriguing disciplines of engineering, mathematics, and science.

The Souhegan High School FIRST Robotics team is typically comprised of 40 students and 10 mentors. The team begins meeting on Wednesday, October 1st. The robotics team meets once a week during the 2014 preseason. The FIRST Robotics Competition challenge is released in January and changes every year. The team designs, fabricates, assembles, and tests a competition robot in six weeks meeting three-four times each week. The team competes in two district competitions in the New England area. The Souhegan High School FIRST Robotics team has a proud history of very competitive robots. Last year, the Souhegan High School FIRST Robotics team proudly won the Granite State District championship! Interested individuals willing to support this noble activity are encouraged to contact Brian Walters (bfwalters@comcast.net or 424-8360) for more information.

Healthy lunch and snack ideas for back to school



If schools and parents received report cards on the lunches they're serving kids, most wouldn't receive a passing score. Many lunches, whether served at school or brought from home, are made with bleached flour, artificial sweeteners, food coloring, high-fructose corn syrup, artificial preservatives, hormones and trans fats. Studies have shown that these ingredients are linked to weight gain, defects in insulin and lipid metabolism, hyperactivity, increased risk of tumors, cancer, digestive issues, asthma, premature heart attacks, diabetes, and overexposure and resistance to antibiotics. Some of these ingredients are even banned in other countries.

As a parent, what can you do to keep your child healthy? Life Time - The Healthy Way of Life Company, suggests checking in with your child's school to learn where foods are sourced, the nutritional values and ingredients in order to make informed decisions.

"The more highly processed foods are, the more likely they are to contain the seven unsavory ingredients. Meaning they are foods it's best to find alternatives for," says Laura Burbank, a registered dietitian with the Life Time Foundation.

"We encourage parents to speak with school nutrition directors and cafeteria managers about reducing the amount of highly processed and artificial items served in their lunch rooms, in favor of wholesome, real foods, and we're able to help parents throughout that process," Burbank says.

Until changes are made, Burbank advises actively engaging kids - starting when they're young - in packing lunch at home. "Getting kids involved in packing their lunches makes them more likely to eat and enjoy them," says Burbank. "They feel helpful and they're learning along the way." She says it's important to include a protein, whole grains, fresh fruit, vegetables and healthy fats with every meal, and provides some ideas below.

Lunch box option one:

* Lunch: turkey or ham sandwich with avocado and spinach on whole grain bread. Look for meat that is free of hormones, antibiotics, nitrates, artificial preservatives and other additives.

* Snack: orange slices and string cheese.

Lunch box option two:

* Lunch: grilled chicken breast, avocado and roasted bell pepper or shredded carrots in a whole grain pita with a Greek yogurt based dressing or pesto.

* Snack: apple slices and almond butter. If your child's school has a strict nut-free lunchroom guideline, include Greek yogurt with vanilla and/or honey.

Lunch box option three:

* Lunch: a wholesome PB&J made with almond butter and 100 percent fruit preserves on whole grain bread.

* Snack: hard boiled eggs, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers with Greek yogurt based vegetable dipping sauce, or pita chips and peppers with hummus.

Healthier lunch room choices

Burbank notes that sometimes making lunch at home isn't a viable option. If that's the case, she suggests parents discuss healthy lunch room options with their kids, as studies have shown that in addition to nutritional benefits, healthier diets also associate with higher academic performance.

Things to consider include:

- * Choose a salad when available to include more vegetables in the meal.
- * Choose white milk over chocolate milk to cut down on sugar intake.
- * Choose 1 percent milk over skim or non-fat milk, the higher fat content is more satiating.
- * Choose whole grain pasta over bread which may contain bleached flour and preservatives.
- * Choose red pasta sauce (vegetable-based) over cream sauce (high in fat).
- * Choose fresh fruit over canned fruit which may contain artificial colors, preservatives and sweeteners.

Parents should also be encouraged to talk to the nutrition directors and cafeteria managers about reducing the amount of highly processed and artificial items in the school meals. The Life Time Foundation is a great resource for more information on this.

The Life Time Foundation partners with schools to help them remove highly processed and artificial ingredients from school meals by providing resources and assisting with menu development. For more information on how your school can get involved, visit www.lifetimefoundation.org. (BPT)



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