

Breaking Stride

Any sports fan has watched the replays. They may be gruesome, but human nature is to watch them over and over again. No, it is not the lowlights of professional basketball or soccer teams, but rather it is the replays of injuries that occur to star athletes. Most recently, Atlanta Falcon's quarterback, Michael Vick, fractured his right leg in a pre-season football game. Earlier in the summer, Cincinnati Reds centerfielder, Ken Griffey Jr., dislocated his shoulder in a baseball game. Both injuries were repeatedly shown on news broadcasts, as well as many other times on television.

Fractures and dislocations are two of the more serious types of injuries that can occur during an athletic event. Early recognition and prompt medical treatment are extremely important with these injuries in both young, up-and-coming athletes, as well as professional athletes.

Dislocations are forceful disruptions of the bones that make up a joint. In Griffey's case, his shoulder separated from the shoulder socket when he dove for a fly ball and the impact from the ground caused the displacement.

A fracture is when the bone has a complete, or incomplete, break. Vick's fractured right fibula was a clean fracture, which aids in the healing process. His injury was caused by a tackle when he was running to pick up extra yardage on a broken pass play.

Signs and symptoms of fractures and dislocations are similar, including obvious deformity or abnormality of the affected area, increased point tenderness directly over the affected bone, swelling (possibly significant), and possible numbness.

If a fracture or dislocation is suspected:

- Splint the injured body part in a comfortable position
- Apply elastic wrap to support splint and apply pressure
- Use ice over area to control pain and swelling
- Transport the athlete for further evaluation by a physician

Do not attempt to reduce or relocate a dislocated joint yourself! This should only be done by a physician.

Professional athletes are fortunate enough to have athletic trainers and team physicians nearby if they sustain an injury. Most young athletes do not have a team physician at their event to help assess and diagnose the injury immediately. Therefore, parents must determine the best course of action for their child.

In case of a serious or life-threatening medical emergency, always call 911. If it is not a life-threatening emergency, then the first call should always be to your pediatrician or family doctor to determine what is best for the child. If the physician has office hours, then they may ask you to bring your child in immediately. If not, they may direct you to an urgent care center or emergency room.

Nationwide Children's *Close To Home*SM Health Care Centers, which feature Urgent Care services, offer treatment for illnesses and injuries that need immediate attention but do not need to be handled by a hospital emergency department. Treatment for the following conditions is provided:

- Possible broken bones/simple fractures (facility will perform x-rays and initial treatment)
- Minor cuts that may need stitches
- Minor/small burns
- Sprains and strains
- Vomiting and diarrhea
- Asthma (mild or moderate wheezing)
- Rashes
- Mild allergic reactions
- Fever

Refer to the emergency department for treatment of the following conditions:

- Obvious broken bone in the leg or arm
- Major trauma/injuries
- Injuries following a motor vehicle crash, being struck by a motor vehicle, or a fall from a height
- Serious head injury (with loss of consciousness, changes in normal behavior, multiple episodes of vomiting)
- Burns with blisters or white areas, or large burns
- Severe difficulty breathing/respiratory distress
- Fever in infants 8 weeks of age or less
- Severe pain
- Seizures

Again, fractures and dislocations are two of the more serious types of injuries that can occur during an athletic event. They can happen to the strongest and most conditioned athletes, as well as those athletes learning the fundamentals for the first time. Receiving prompt and proper treatment is key to returning to play quickly and not breaking stride.

Consult your primary care physician for more serious injuries that do not respond to basic first aid. As an added resource, the staff at Nationwide Children's Sports Medicine is available to diagnose and treat sports-related injuries for youth or adolescent athletes. Services are now available in four locations, to make an appointment, call 614-355-6000.