Know More. Do More.

Understanding Substance Misuse in Teens

Participating in sports is good for a student athlete's health and self-esteem, yet it also comes with the risk of painful injury that sometimes requires surgery and treatment with opioid pain medicines.

When this is the case, they need others on their team to help them get well and keep them that way — including their parents, doctor, athletic trainer and coaches.

Dublin ACT Coalition

Nationwide Children's

This information was made possible by the Dublin ACT Coalition in partnership with Nationwide Children's Hospital.

Join us in protecting our student athletes from dangerous opioid pain meds.

When student athletes are prescribed opioid pain medicine for an injury or after surgery — sports-related or not — they need others on their team to help them get well and keep them that way.

For this reason, Nationwide Children's Hospital, in partnership with the Dublin ACT Coalition, has developed a toolkit for parents, athletic trainers and coaches which is designed to:

- Underscore the safe use of opioids and other prescription medicines
- Educate about the risk factors that increase teen risk for addiction and how to know signs of misuse
- Provide a clear and consistent no-use message regarding alcohol and other drugs and the misuse of prescription medicines
- Empower everyone in your sphere of influence to say something when they see something to save a life

On and off the field or court, athletes need to be 100% to be successful, achieve their dreams and thrive not just athletically but also academically, psychologically and socially. **We all need to be involved to make this happen.**

WHEN A CHILD OR TEEN HAS BEEN PRESCRIBED OPIOIDS:

MONITOR
Only allow your child to take medicines as prescribed. No one else should take this medicine.

SECURE
Keep your child's medicine in a locked cabinet or lock box AND out of the reach of children.

TRANSITION
Get your child off an opioid medicine as soon as you can.

DISPOSE
Medicine should be disposed of responsibly when it is no longer needed.

KNOW THE SIGNS OF POSSIBLE ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG ABUSE

Personal appearance changes, such as:

- Messy, careless appearance and poor hygiene
- Red, flushed cheeks or face not brought on by athletic activity
- Heavy sweating not brought on by athletic activity
- Fatigue not brought on by athletic activity
- Itchy skin
- Rapid weight loss not brought on by athletic activity

Behavioral changes, such as:

- Decreased motivation
- Hostility or anger
- Unusually clumsy, lack of coordination
- Slurred speech
- Loud or obnoxious behavior
- Being deceitful or secretive

Changes in routine, such as:

- New friends and/or being secretive about them
- Lying about new interests and activities
- Loss of interest in school or things they once cared about
- Money/valuables missing from home
- Demand for more privacy, locked doors, eye contact avoidance
- Skipping school

Know More. Do More.

Understanding Substance Misuse in Teens

ATHLETIC TRAINER

STUDENT ATHLETES AND OPIOID SAFETY

ADDICTION can be an unintended consequence of misusing powerful medicines.

100% ON AND OFF THE FIELD

If a student athlete has been injured or had surgery, the doctor may prescribe a powerful opioid medicine like Percocet®, OxyContin®, or Vicodin®. While these medicines can be helpful, **misuse can lead to changes in a child's brain, can create lifelong addiction pathways, and can result in death.**

HAVE A GAME PLAN FOR HEALING

When a student athlete has been injured, it's important to have a communication plan and a return-to-play plan in place for everyone — you, coaches, parents and the student athlete — to ensure effective and consistent care.

- **Please partner with the athlete's parents** in making sure that student athletes are following these rules and their care plans. Reinforce the need to go off of powerful opioid pain meds as soon as possible.
- **Focus rehabilitation goals on full injury recovery** — that is, without the need for powerful pain medicines.
- **Avoid the injury/pain/re-injury cycle**. Create return-to-play goals that prevent a premature return that can trigger a pain/re-injury pattern and lead to chronic injury and/or dependence on pain medicine. Look into both short-term and future life goals.
- **Know the signs of opioid, alcohol and other substance misuse and addiction.** If you see a student athlete misusing or sharing prescription medicine, talk with his or her parents.
- **Remember the importance of social connectedness**. Losing the social connection to the team can be as damaging as the physical injury itself. Include the student in team practices, games and social events, as appropriate.
- **Be prepared to respond in a crisis.** Establish crisis resources for parents — from school nurses and community resources to crisis hotlines. Be trained in emergency response for opioid overdose with naloxone (Narcan®).

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Your role as an athletic trainer

INJURY MANAGEMENT — KEY TO PREVENTING OPIOID MISUSE

As you know, there are rules when it comes to managing an athlete's injury just as there are in sports. Please partner with an athlete's parents in making sure that student athletes are following these rules and their care plans:

- **Use ice to reduce soreness and swelling**. If symptoms persist, contact a doctor, especially if there is a lack of full-joint motion.
- **Check with a healthcare provider** to see if over-the-counter medicines, such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen are okay for a student athlete to take. As with all medicines, always follow the directions on the label and any instructions from a healthcare provider.
- **Opioids for pain** should be used only if prescribed by a doctor and only when other non-opioid treatments have not provided relief.
- **Fractures, sprains and broken bones need plenty of rest to heal properly.** The athlete should see an orthopedic specialist, who can evaluate and manage the healing process. Again, returning to play too soon may trigger an injury/pain/re-injury cycle and prolong use of powerful opioid medicines.

THE ATHLETIC TRAINER'S CHECKLIST

When a student athlete has been injured or had surgery, your role as athletic trainer is to support the child's treatment plan and encourage getting off of powerful and potentially dangerous opioid medicines. Here is what you need to KNOW and DO:

KNOW MORE

- Be educated and teach about opioid painkillers and addiction.
- Know the facts about alcohol and other drug misuse.
- Know and help address the risk factors and dangers of misuse.

DO MORE

- Communicate with athletes and parents about pain management treatment.
- Set appropriate rehabilitation and recovery priorities.

DO MORE

- Communicate or intervene when a child is heading toward crisis.
- Be prepared and equipped in the event of overdose.

Please refer to our detailed checklist for athletic trainers for further guidance.

The Athletic Trainer's checklist

WHEN A TEEN HAS BEEN PRESCRIBED OPIOIDS:

MONITOR Only allow your child to take medicines as prescribed.

SECURE Keep your child's medicine in a locked cabinet or lock box AND out of the reach of children.

TRANSITION Move your child off an opioid medicine as soon as you can.

DISPOSE Medicine should be disposed of responsibly when it is no longer needed.

Ohio rules for prescribing

Ohio issued new rules for prescribing opioid pain relievers for treatment of severe pain. Typically, no more than 5 days for children under age 18 and only with written consent by a parent or guardian.

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