

# **Prevention of Sports Injuries**

## **Flag Football**

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### **PERSONAL FITNESS:**

- Pace yourself; don't do too much too soon when conditioning for flag football season.
- A pre-season conditioning program with emphasis on stretching and strength training should be implemented prior to the beginning of a flag football season. When preparing for flag football season, begin participating in activities specific to flag football, such as upper and especially lower body muscular fitness exercises and stretching. This will strengthen the connective tissue (muscle, bones, ligaments, and tendons) and will provide strong support of the lower body. (Most knee injuries occur in the weaker of the two legs).
- Remember to warm-up and stretch at least 5 – 10 minutes before practicing or playing a game.
- NOTE: Prior injury to the body predisposes one to re-injury of that particular extremity.
- NOTE: Athletes with poor muscle strength, particularly in the hamstring, quadriceps, and gastrocnemius muscles are more susceptible to lower body injury.

### **EQUIPMENT:**

- Oral injuries can be prevented through the use of mouth guards/protectors.
- Rubber molded cleats are mandated during military flag football participation.
- Jewelry, i.e., rings, necklaces, etc. are not recommended during flag football activity participation.
- Clothing attire that contains pockets is not recommended due to the risk of fingers getting caught/ lodged in the clothing.

### **TRAINING / TECHNIQUE:**

- Flag football is not considered a contact sport, so risk of injury is lower than participation in American (tackle) football. It's important to note the more contact the player incurs with other players, the higher the risk of injury.
- The style of play by a football team may increase risk of injury; the more contact involved, the higher the incidence for injury.
- A trained coaching staff can impact positively upon flag-football injury prevention. Coaches should be able to provide safe information to players on the team regarding preparation, conditioning, and training proper playing techniques.

- Officiated games decrease the risk of injury occurrence. Enforcement of rules assists in decreasing the incidence of injury.
- Contact a local MWR Trainer or trained coaching staff for additional information on flag football conditioning. Many MWR Facilities provide safety/injury prevention information to coaches, players, and officials regarding preparation, conditioning, and training proper playing techniques.

**ENVIRONMENT:**

- Be aware of the environment around you. Prior to participating in flag football look for predisposing risk factors on the playing field such as divots, holes, soft drink tops, glass, etc.
- Alcohol consumption should be discouraged during athletic participation.
- Liquid and nutrition replenishment is recommended to decrease exposure-related illness.

REFERENCE: Caine, J., Caine, C., and Lindner, K. Epidemiology of Sports Injuries. Human Kinetics Publishers, Inc., 1996.