



Ada Bone & Joint Clinic

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Common Sense in Medicine

by

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To Play or Not to Play

One of the most difficult decisions for a coach or injured player to make is who should be in the game.

When a player is hurt, a "time out" might stop the game or the player might leave the field unnoticed. If the play of the game is stopped, the player is evaluated on the field to be sure it is safe to transport him to the sidelines where he can be further examined.

The trainer and physician examine the player and discuss their findings. If the injury is serious enough that the player cannot return to the game, his injury is splinted, iced and elevated. But if the injury can be taped or braced and the player can continue playing then the decision has to be made whether continued playing is in the best interest of the player and the team.

To continue playing in the current game may put the player at risk of further injury because he has to alter his playing style. This may increase his chance of missing the next few games which may be more important games. The coach

also must decide if the player with an injury is still better than his unhurt back up player.

Often the injured player wants to play so much that he tries to minimize his injury by not reporting it, or denying pain or tenderness during the medical exam. Knowing the facts helps the coach make the best decision for the team. An injured player doesn't realize he may let the other team score the winning touchdown by missing a tackle that someone else could have made. Other times a player overreacts to every minor injury which makes it difficult to tell when he is really hurt.

Generally the quicker treatment can be started the quicker the recovery. Ice applied immediately after an injury is much more effective than an hour later.

A lot to consider in a hurry!

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