

## Where Have all the Kids Gone

Sports, sports and more sports. Take the kids to practice at 5am before school, pick the kids up from practice after school, and take the kids to numerous games and private training in the evening and weekends. This is just the beginning, wait until they get into high school. What is going on? Is there nothing else for the kids today other than organized sports? It would seem so as there is a tremendous push to get kids involved in sports and athletic training at a very young age. I am not against organized sports or individualized training as I am a trainer. However, I am beginning to wonder how much is too much? Why the push? Do the kids really want this or do they want to be out building a tree fort or playing flashlight tag at night with their friends? I will try to shed some light on what I believe is having a big impact physically on the kids of today.

When I was a kid growing up, sure I played sports, wiffle ball, softball, football, and tag as well as built tree forts, hung on ropes from trees, with all my friends in a variety of backyards. None of my friends had private trainers to teach them how to rotate properly when throwing a ball. We just threw it and let our bodies figure out the rest. I didn't know what a pulled hamstring was, a rotator cuff tear was or a blown out ACL. I played all day went home, got up and did it again. No big deal, but today it is a big deal, because too many kids today are coming home with a variety of aches and pains that have normally been associated with that of a professional level athlete at the tail end of his or her career, not at the high school or even middle school level. This is a concern and if it's not it should be to all.

I work in a variety of different settings and see a tremendous amount of good things happening in the fitness industry. However one negative is the increase in injuries among the youth of today

that is growing in leaps and bounds, not decreasing. The question is what do we do? We need to educate.

If your child is a pitcher and he begins throwing at age 8 and continues to throw and doesn't do anything to counter the throwing motion, he will develop shoulder problems. What I mean by counter is teach him to throw with the other side, reverse the throwing motion to strengthen the back. Work on the muscle imbalances.

I have worked with numerous kids (8-18) who come to me and without doing any physical assessments I can see (visual assessment) how their shoulder slopes down and forward, their right knee buckles in and right foot points out. I know they are going to tell me of knee pain and shoulder pain because of the load bearing problems on their joints. We need to recognize this and realize if this is not addressed the potential for serious injury exists.

We hear from the coach that your kid has real potential but he needs to put on some muscle and work on his throwing mechanics. Here come the weights and the pitching coach. We start slapping weights on these kids and they can't even support the body they have. A basic progression for weight training is to show me control of the body you have and then I will add external resistance. Body weight training is pushups, squats (single leg), pull-ups, and dips. How many kids in high school or middle school can perform 20 good pushups, 10 single leg squats, 10 pull-ups and 10 bodyweight dips? Not many, but they are all performing bench presses, back squats or sitting at machines pushing, pulling and pressing weights. To me that is a problem. Weight training is great for you as long as you follow a progression that is safe and comfortable for the individual you are training.

A final note on this topic is what about the kids who are not involved in sports. What do they have: cable TV, the internet, video games? Anyone hear of childhood obesity. We are dealing with two extremes right now. Excessive over training and absolutely no training. I will go back to my original thought. What

happened to the rope swing hanging from the tree fort in the backyard?

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