

The Sports Doctor: Overuse injuries similar for different sports

By Dr. Robert Weil drweilsportsdoctor@yahoo.com February 13, 2012 12:38PM

Sometimes I'm amazed at the similarities of not only the problems — foot, ankles, shins, knees and back that we see in young athletes — but with the pressures that are also common.

Just last week there were four 13- to 15-year-old kids with “overuse injuries” — all foot mechanics related. An ice dancer, and soccer, volleyball and tennis players. All are serious athletes, playing their sports daily and almost year round. The ice dancer has ankle tendonitis; the volleyball player has knee tendonitis; the soccer player has heel inflammation; and the tennis player has shin splints. The young athletes with their parents would have similar questions and concerns.

We've written in numerous articles about how foot type and mechanics can affect not only the feet themselves but all the areas above. I've also stressed the “overkill” of these schedules and demand on these young growing bodies. My famous, infamous “intelligent rest” recommendation is usually a tough sell.

Pressure to push and play through many of these persistent overuse injuries comes from numerous places, including coaches, parents, the athlete's teammates and the athlete themselves. Helping to reduce many of these lower extremity problems that are persistent is the use of prescription orthotics along with physical therapy and strengthening and balance exercises. Hopefully, all four of these young hotshots will safely and quickly get to return to the sports they love. It's true — all that changes is the uniform! Let's get some emails.

Problem: My 15-year-old daughter plays high school basketball and deals with constant ball-of-the-foot blisters.

Kathy, Wheaton

Answer: Persistent blisters mean excessive pressure — which calls for a check of everything from foot type to shoes and socks. Ball-of-foot location is often solved with orthotics to redistribute weight. Blisters happen but, when persistent, there is something else going on.

Problem: I've been a runner for 10 years with no problems until last year with Achilles tendonitis. Rest and physical therapy have not solved it. I have high arches and was told orthotics are for flat feet. What next?

Steve, Lisle

Answer: Flexible orthotics are very helpful for high arch supinated feet. They can enhance shock absorption and take stress off the Achilles. Continue the exercises from physical therapy and check with a sports podiatrist.

Dr. Robert A. Weil is a sports podiatrist with an office in Aurora. You can hear him on his weekly radio show at 6:30 p.m. Thursdays on 90.9 FM. Contact him at drweilsportsdoctor@yahoo.com.