

ACL Injuries on the Rise...but Why?



I read a disturbing article in the NY Times today about a rise of ACL and meniscus tears in young, pre-adolescent athletes. The article was reporting on a study conducted by Dr. J. Todd Lawrence from Children's Hospital in Philadelphia. Dr. Lawrence and his team did extensive research tracking the number of ACL and meniscus tears, as well as the number of fractures of the Hospital from 1999 until early this year.

The article was alarming for a couple different reasons. First, the number of ACL and meniscus tears diagnosed at Children's Hospital over the last 12 years is *staggering!* According to the study:

*"When the researchers examined the pediatric hospital records, from 1999 through early this year, they found only 155 tibial spine fractures, while there were 914 confirmed A.C.L. tears and 996 meniscus tears. More important, while the incidence of tibial spine fractures increased at a rate of about 1 percent per year during that period, **the incidence of A.C.L. tears increased by more than 11 percent per year.** The difference almost certainly was not a result of better equipment leading to better diagnoses of A.C.L. tears, Dr. Lawrence says. "Even in 1999, M.R.I. technology was quite good," so it was possible for physicians to differentiate between the injuries."*

Over the last twelve years, that totals almost 2,000 ACL and meniscus tears! And remember, this is only one hospital. Are you kidding me? The rate at which they're increasing, a jaw-dropping 11% increase per year, is flat-out SCARY.

The second alarming thing about the article came shortly after the above paragraph when addressing "Why" these tears are happening. The article states:

"Why? Scientists still aren't sure, and that question was outside the scope of the current analysis. But Dr. Lawrence, a pediatric orthopedic surgeon who treats many of the afflicted young athletes, is willing to speculate. "I think it's primarily because kids are out there trying to emulate professional athletes," he says."

The fact that this doctor is only “willing to speculate” is comical. He’s basically saying he doesn’t know *why* the increase has happened. Do we really have to involve scientists and physicians to get an answer? I’m sorry, but chalking something up to being “outside the scope of current analysis” is complete *nonsense*. We don’t need analysis. We don’t need more testing. **What we need to do is to take a look at our kids’ posture to find the answer.**

The answer is simple if we’d just open our eyes. Let’s assume this client has a torn ACL and/or meniscus. Can you see *why* that might have happened?



Unfortunately, this young athlete’s body is in no way going to support him, *regardless* of what sport he plays. When this kid lands after grabbing a rebound, for example, his everted foot and knee position will prevent him from landing like he’s designed to land, with a natural shock-absorbption to his legs. His left leg is locked out, while his right knee is bent...not a good start! His upper back and spine have also lost their shock-absorbption design and can’t help out. Meanwhile, his elevated right hip is causing his left side to overload, and **his left knee is a blown ACL waiting to happen.**

Dr. Lawrence also states that kids are more and more trying to emulate their favorite sports hero, and that 20 years ago, that didn’t happen. I hate to break it to you Doc, but 20-25 years ago the walls of my room were plastered with Bo Jackson posters, and every time I played baseball and football I was emulating him.

The bottom line is that determining the root cause of the skyrocketing number of ACL and meniscus tears isn’t that hard. Our kids in this young generation just *aren’t* as functional as generations past. They’re growing up in a technology generation. They no longer have to ride their bike across town to see if their friend can play. Today’s kids aren’t as active, and as a result, they have some pretty extreme dysfunctions and compensations that have set in. Those imbalances are resulting in some pretty severe

injuries at an extremely young age. Injuries that will impact them for the rest of their lives. If we stay focused on improving the position of the body coming to the activities, rather than the activities (or intensity of the activities) themselves, the number of ACL tears would decrease *greatly*.

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