

Question:

At this time of the year, my children are starting to get involved in winter sports. Are there any particular exercises that can help reduce their chance of getting injuries?

Answer:

This is an interesting question. Sometimes, you don't think of the effects different sports can have on your body, and parents can be oblivious to the injury risks.

But when young people transfer their interests from one style of sport to the other, it's not unusual to find them dealing with an increase in injuries as a result.

If you move from a summer sport, like swimming, which is a non-weight bearing activity that uses an inner range of movement, to winter sports like netball or rugby, which involve not only weight bearing ability, but also the need for greater stability and strength, and use a different range of movement with more specific muscle groups, then the change can bring on problems.

Some areas causing these problems could relate to poor posture, lack of co-ordination, instability between the hip, knee and ankle joints and shortened muscle groups.

One way to foresee any injury risk is to run your child through a pre-season screening program as a precautionary move.

The key to this type of assessment and follow up if required is to prepare the individual with sport specific exercises. For example, with soccer, zig zag run drills are effective; with netball, bound and pivot drills work well.

Over the years, I have found the key to getting children, or anyone, doing exercises is to keep them minimal, make them fun and most importantly, make them effective.

A thorough assessment by experts will target problem areas.

A program set up with targeted stretches, strengthening or other specific needs for the individual can be advised.

I feel it is important in all levels of sport to be prepared – otherwise, you could find yourself unable to play the game you love because of injuries.