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## Keep Young Athletes Safe

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# Keep Young Athletes Safe: Your Guide to

## Preventing Sports Injuries

School is back in session, and so are fall sports! Whether your child plays soccer, football, volleyball, or runs cross country, keeping them injury-free should be a top priority. The good news? Most youth sports injuries can be prevented with the right approach.

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### **Start with Smart Conditioning**

Conditioning is the foundation of injury prevention. Young athletes should begin training at least 4–6 weeks before their sport starts. This gives their bodies time to adapt gradually.

Start with the basics like jogging, jumping jacks, and bodyweight squats. Then add sport-specific drills slowly. For example, a soccer player might begin with light ball work, while a runner starts with short, easy distances. The key is gradual progression—adding too much too soon can lead to injuries.

### **The Power of a Proper Warm-Up**

Never skip the warm-up! Think of it like starting your car on a cold morning—it gets everything moving smoothly. Spend 10–15 minutes doing light cardio and dynamic stretches, like leg swings, arm circles, and gentle lunges. Save static stretching (holding a stretch) for after practice.

### **Recovery is Not Optional**

Rest days are just as important as training days. During rest, muscles repair and grow. Young athletes need at least one full rest day per week and 8–9 hours of sleep each night.

Watch for signs your child needs extra rest:

- Excessive fatigue
- Frequent illness
- Aches or pains that don't go away

These are red flags that they may be overdoing it.

### **Fuel the Machine**

Good nutrition powers performance and prevents injuries. Encourage regular meals full of:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Lean proteins
- Whole grains

Hydration is key! Water should be their main drink. Save sports drinks for workouts longer than an hour.

## Listen to Their Body

Teach your child that pain is not normal. Some muscle soreness after hard workouts is expected, but sharp or persistent pain needs attention. Help your athlete learn to notice their body's signals and understand the difference between soreness and injury.

## When to See a Professional

If pain lasts more than a few days, affects daily activities, or keeps them from performing their best, it's time to see a [physical therapist](#). Early treatment can prevent small problems from becoming big ones. Remember, the goal is to keep sports fun while building lifelong healthy habits. With proper preparation and smart training, your young athlete can have a safe and successful season!

## We Can Help! Safe, Active Recovery for Young Athletes

At our clinic, we use specialized unloading training equipment to help athletes recover safely from tough practices or minor injuries. Tools like the Total Gym allow for gentle squats, ankle mobility, and lumbar work, while our [AlterG Anti-Gravity Treadmill](#) lets athletes walk or run at a fraction of their body weight. These therapies reduce stress on joints and muscles, promote healing, maintain fitness, and support proper movement patterns—all while keeping kids active during recovery.

Ask our team how unloading training can help your athlete stay healthy, recover faster, and perform their best this season!

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### **Spotlight on RED-S: Relative Energy**

#### **Deficiency in Sport**

RED-S happens when athletes don't take in enough energy (calories) to meet the demands of their training and growth. It's not just about nutrition—it affects hormones, bone health, immunity, and performance.

## Who's at Risk?

- Athletes in endurance sports (cross country, swimming, cycling)
- Athletes in aesthetic or weight-sensitive sports (dance, gymnastics, wrestling)
- Highly motivated youth who push through fatigue and under-report pain
- Busy student-athletes who skip meals unintentionally

## Top 3 Signs to Watch For

### Female Athletes:

1. Irregular or missed periods (or very late onset of periods in teens)
2. Stress fractures or recurring bone injuries
3. Unexplained fatigue or declining performance

### Male Athletes:

1. Low testosterone signs (decreased muscle mass, lower energy, reduced morning erections)
2. Frequent injuries or slow recovery
3. Loss of motivation or performance plateau despite hard training

## Why It Matters

RED-S isn't just about skipped meals, it can affect almost every part of a young athlete's health:

- Increased injury risk: Stress fractures, tendon or ligament problems, and overuse injuries are more common.
- Hormonal changes: Low estrogen in females or low testosterone in males can affect growth, bone development, and mood.
- Weakened immune system: Athletes may get sick more often or recover slowly from common illnesses.
- Performance setbacks: Fatigue, slower recovery, and training plateaus can make it harder to improve even with hard work.
- Long-term health consequences: Chronic RED-S can affect bone density, heart health, metabolism, and overall growth and development

**Key takeaway:** Even subtle signs, like frequent fatigue, recurring injuries, or missed periods in girls, can signal an underlying energy imbalance. Catching it early allows athletes to recover fully, stay safe,

and continue performing at their best, while protecting long-term health.

## Preventing and Treating RED-S

The key is balance, eating enough to fuel training and growth while supporting overall health.

Prevention:

- Education: Teach athletes, parents, and coaches the importance of fueling for performance.
- Smart training plans: Build in rest, recovery, and gradual progressions.
- Open communication: Encourage athletes to speak up about fatigue, pain, or health changes.

Treatment:

- Restore energy balance: Ensure the athlete eats enough to meet training and growth needs.
- Modify activity: Adjust training load to reduce stress while recovery takes place.
- Team approach: Physical therapists, physicians, and dietitians collaborate to guide a safe return to full participation.

With the right support, athletes can recover fully, return safely to sport, and build habits that protect long-term health and peak performance.

### ***Sway Balance Screenings: Baseline Performance Screen for Athletes***



## Lifemotion Balance Center

Take the first step towards empowering your athlete's safety and success with LifeMotion Physical Therapy's comprehensive baseline screening using the Sway Medical App.

This thorough assessment evaluates balance, reaction time, visual processing, and cognitive/memory functions, providing a critical preseason foundation. If a concussion is suspected, a retest can pinpoint changes from the baseline, guiding effective physical therapy interventions to ensure a safe and efficient return to play.

Schedule your athlete's screening today by calling 918-574-2575, option 1.

### *New Graduate Highlight*



(Clinicians pictured from left to right: Matthew Lynn, PTA; Jackson, PT Tech; Dr. Trevor McKay, DPT; Dr. Garrett Field, DPT)

Christie was a shining star at our clinic and always ready to rehab with a smile! Our team had a blast getting her back to running and lifting with our friends over at [Orangetheory Fitness - Midtown Tulsa](#). Best wishes Christie!

## *Google Reviews*

*"I can't recommend Lifemotion enough. Dr. Ryan Smith and Dr. Trevor McKay are both incredibly intuitive and knowledgeable professionals.*

*Through a thoughtful series of assessments, they were able to pinpoint the root causes of my issues—something other providers had missed. Their approach goes beyond just the physical; they guide you*



*through the recovery process both physically and psychologically, helping you feel empowered and supported every step of the way. If you're looking for expert care that treats the whole person, this is the team to trust!"*



*"The best physical therapy place that I have been to. The staff at the reception area is friendly and knows each client by name. They make eye contact and are always smiling and welcoming. The physical therapy staff are professional and also make a point to know each client personally. I had the pleasure of working with Drs. "Hartley" and "Garrett" and my husband with Dr. "Trevor". I would highly recommend them."*





## A Message From Ryan

As we dive into the vibrant fall youth sports season, the LifeMotion team remains dedicated to keeping you and your young athletes healthy, strong, and ready to return from any setbacks. Our continued partnership with [West Side Alliance Soccer Club](#) has allowed us to complete over 600 preseason concussion screenings using the [Sway](#) platform, ensuring safer and more effective recovery for their soccer players. We're honored by WSA's trust and proud to support our community's athletes.

We're thrilled to share that our campus upgrades are complete, featuring remodeled restrooms, updated main lobby flooring and lighting, new handrails, and a freshly paved parking lot. These improvements enhance your experience and ensure our facilities are ready to serve you for years to come. Thank you for your patience during this process.

Our team is growing, and we're excited to welcome three new clinicians whose stories we'll share in future newsletters. We've also invested in advanced tools to better assess recovery from orthopedic conditions, ensuring you're fully prepared for life and sport before discharge. Stay tuned for more details!

*A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has left a Google Review—your support has helped us surpass 200 reviews with an incredible 4.9 rating!* These reviews are vital in helping others in the greater Tulsa community discover LifeMotion. If you have a moment, we'd deeply appreciate you sharing your experience online.

As always, whether it's you, a friend, or a family member facing orthopedic, pelvic, or balance challenges, the [LifeMotion team](#) is here to help.

## References

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