

Fewer injuries in girls' soccer and basketball when high schools have athletic trainers

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Study shows that recurrent injury rates are three times higher in girls' basketball in schools without athletic trainers. Credit: Lurie Children's

Availability of a full-time certified athletic trainer in high school reduces overall and recurrent injury rates in girls who play on the soccer or basketball team, according to a study published in *Injury Epidemiology*. Schools with athletic trainers were also better at identifying athletes with concussion. This is the first study to compare injury rates in schools that have an athletic trainer with those that do not.

"Our results are significant because currently only about a third of high schools have access to a full-time athletic trainer," says study co-author Cynthia LaBella, MD, Medical Director of the Institute for Sports Medicine at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, and Professor of Pediatrics at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. "The positive impact we observed is likely because [athletic trainers](#) are licensed healthcare professionals who work with coaches and athletes to apply evidence-based injury prevention strategies, and they are able to recognize and manage injuries when they happen,

which may reduce severity or complications."

LaBella and colleagues analyzed data from two injury reporting systems, for high schools with athletic trainers and for those without, over a two-year period. They found that overall injury rates in both girls' soccer and basketball were significantly higher in schools without athletic trainers. Recurrent [injury](#) rates were six times higher in girls' soccer and nearly three times higher in girls' basketball in schools without athletic trainers.

The study also found that concussion rates in both sports were significantly higher in schools with athletic trainers, however.

"Although rates of concussion were lower in schools without athletic trainers, it is unlikely that fewer concussions are occurring in these schools," says Dr. LaBella. "More likely, concussions are reported more often in schools with athletic trainers because these professionals are better skilled than coaches and athletes in identifying signs and symptoms of concussions and remove athletes with suspected [concussion](#) from play until they can be evaluated and cleared for return by an appropriate healthcare provider."

The study provides evidence-based support for position statements from medical professional organizations, such as the American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Family Physicians and American Academy of Neurology, that call for greater athletic trainer coverage for high [school](#) athletes.

More information: Lauren A. Pierpoint et al, Injuries in girls' soccer and basketball: a comparison of high schools with and without athletic trainers, *Injury Epidemiology* (2018). DOI: [10.1186/s40621-018-0159-6](https://doi.org/10.1186/s40621-018-0159-6)

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