

Safety Rules for Intramural Flag Football

Introduction - Routinely, ground safety reports reveals sports related injuries to be the most common cause of off-duty to our beneficiaries; this briefing was developed in an attempt to reduce the number of injuries through proactive intervention and control the documentation process of injury occurrence

Flag Football has long been very popular in the armed forces of the United States with the Air Force even completing a 10-year descriptive study of flag football injuries from 93-2002. They found that the leading cause of injury was due to contact with another player, which caused 42% of their reported injuries. The second leading group of issues included slips, trips, and falls, resulting simply from the act of running during the game. There were even some reported concussions.

Fifty percent of the injuries were to the lower extremities, such as the legs, knees, and ankles. All of these injuries were recorded only if they resulted in at least one day lost from work. Fractures accounted for the greatest percentage of these disabling injuries, followed by sprains and strains.

One of the typical injuries patterns results in a knee ligament sprain. These can be mild, moderate, or severe, depending on the degree of ligament tear and other associated tissue damage. Treatment begins with RICE: rest, ice, compression, and elevation.

Wearing the proper Gear- Players must show up ready to play in **athletic shorts / pants without pockets**, an athletic shirt and appropriate sneakers. **Only Rubber** cleats allowed because of safety concerns. All flags and jerseys will be provided by the Intramural Sports department. It's also a good idea to refrain from wearing jewelry or clothing with pockets. In fact, many flag football league will forbid wearing such items in their rulebooks.

Although flag football is supposed to be a non-contact sport, it would be wise to wear some basic protective gear, mouthpieces for example (one of the first and probably the most important gear) are inexpensive, easy to use, and greatly reduce the risk of oral injuries. **(Provided by Laughlin AFB 47 MDG).**

Knee braces, ankle guards (metals sides must be wrapped), and Jock straps are also useful, and these pieces of equipment can be bought almost anywhere with a sporting goods department. While there's no tackling in flag football, you may be falling down from time to time, and high-speed collisions on the playing field are not unheard of. All of

these protective items cushion your body whenever you fall or forcibly collide with another player. They therefore help in preventing bone fractures or Sprains.

Proper Preparation for Play

Prepare your Body- Lifting weights, walking and jogging are excellent ways to get in the proper condition for playing flag football. Moderation is the key, as trying to lift too much, or run too far, can be counter-productive and result in injuries.

Warm up and Stretch- Before doing anything strenuous, you have to warm up your body first. Warm ups are incredibly important because they condition the body for the work-out its going to receive. Warm up don't necessarily mean stretching. In fact stretching should be saved until after you've warmed your body up a little since if you stretch yourself too much you might end up tearing a few ligaments. The First thing to do when warming up is to take a light jog. Then stretch your muscles starting from your head down. Start by rotating your neck, then your shoulders, then your arms, waist, hips, your legs and then your foot. Sixteen counts on each body part should do. Warm ups should last 15 to 30 minutes.

Stretching helps by improving the blood circulation in the said body parts and also by increasing the body's temperature. This warms up the muscles about to be used and reduces the chances of sprains and pulls. That way once you get into the field, your body will be more than ready to accommodate all the strenuous tasks that it will have to do.

If you've suffered an injury to some part of your body in the past, be sure to take extra care. Chances are that it may be more susceptible to injuries in the future. This is where protective devices like knee braces and wraps come in handy.

Follow the Rules- The rules are there for a reason and to help everyone enjoy the game, so it's important to follow them. Moves like blocking from behind or lowering the shoulder while Blocking is prohibited in league play, and they should also be banned from informal games due to the increased likelihood of injuries.

Stay Alert- Always pay attention to what's going on during a flag football game, especially if you're sprinting down the field. Not paying attention while going for a pass could cause a collision with another player, and such things always carry a risk of injury. Constant awareness is an excellent tool in avoiding flag football injuries.

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