



## *From the MAFP Presidents Pen -*

# ARE YOU REALLY READY FOR FOOTBALL?

(AND HOCKEY, BASEBALL, LACROSSE...)

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You expect every football player on the field to wear a helmet, every hockey goalie to have a face-mask, and every catcher in baseball to wear a chest protector. However, there is one piece of equipment that these athletes may not have that could really set them up for a major injury – did they remember to don their athletic supporter? A 2014 study of male high school athletes showed that only 13% reported wearing a protective cup during contact sports. Even more concerning was the evidence that one out of 6 of these athletes experienced a sports-related testicular injury during the study interval.

Recently one of my colleagues, Pediatric Urologist Dr Richard Caesar, had a high-school football player from a local community suffer a serious testicular injury. When I spoke with Dr Caesar this past week about his patient, he indicated that the young man was recovering, but he was more concerned about the lack of specific policies at many schools to require that athletes participating in contact sports wear mandatory scrotal protection. A testicular injury does not just cause an individual to suffer a significant amount of pain (and it is one of the most intense pains imaginable, as those who have had the trauma can testify), testicular injury is one of the leading causes of male infertility. So you are not just risking hurting yourself, you are risking the potential existence of your future descendants.

We can't really 'blame' our young athletes for not thinking about their unborn sons and daughters. Generally most adolescents are not focused on their future families when they line up at the 40 yard line for the kickoff. However, we expect more from the older coaches, athletic directors and high-school principals. They should be looking out for our student athletes and taking better care of the young men in their charge. I can't help agree with the experts, wearing proper protective gear not only makes sense, it should be mandatory.

## FAQ:

1. Which sports are considered higher risk for testicular injury?  
Research has shown that the rate of testicular injury is highest in lacrosse, soccer, wrestling and baseball, with football close behind. Most sports medicine experts



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would include hockey and basketball as posing a significant risk for participants as well. Athletes who have been born with only one normally descended testicle should wear protection in all sports.

2. What should concerned parents do to make sure their sons are safe from serious injury from a sports injury to the genitals?

Just the same as parents would pay attention to the proper footwear by taking their sons shopping for the best cleats, skates or running shoes, the smart parent will include a trip to a sporting goods store that has a selection of options for scrotal protection as a necessary stop before the season begins. Some are okay with the basic inexpensive option of the 'athletic supporter with cup', but now there are many new designs such as compression shorts with removable fiberglass barriers that can provide the most comfortable options for even the most particular athlete. Remember, being prepared is much better than trying to deal with the consequences of a serious injury!