

STRENGTH TRAINING FOR LACROSSE ATHLETES

BY MICHAEL A. TABOR

With greater numbers of children involved in organized sports, such as Lacrosse, there is a significant need for better physical preparation to prevent sports-related injuries.

Strength training has the most potential of any physical activity to address this need.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Sports Medicine, and the National Strength and Conditioning Association all support strength training for young athletes—when it is done properly.

The latest research highlights the benefits of strength training, including increased muscle strength, flexibility and endurance, which in turn reduce potential for injury. Strength training can be incorporated into a child's fitness or sports-related exercise routine without negative consequences to growth and development.

Strength Training Defined

Strength training is a program of exercises designed to increase muscle strength and endurance.

Strength training focuses on lighter weights, natural resistance and controlled movements, with special emphasis on proper technique and safety. The result is that there is no excessive strain on muscles, tendons and growth plates.

Strength training should not be confused with weightlifting, bodybuilding and powerlifting, which are defined by lifting heavy weights with the intent of increasing muscle mass.

A program of heavy weight lifting can put excess strain on young muscles, tendons and growth plates, especially when proper technique is sacrificed in favor of weight. Such programs are not recommended for young athletes.

Benefits of Strength Training

Supervised strength training that emphasizes proper technique:

- Increases your child's muscle strength and endurance;
- Protects your child's muscles and joints from injury; and
- Helps improve athletic performance

Additional health benefits from strength training include:

- Stronger bones;
- Improved heart and lung function;
- A healthy body composition;
- Lower blood cholesterol levels;
- Improved self-esteem and decreased chance of depression; and
- Long-term commitment to health and fitness

Guidelines for Strength Training

What is the appropriate age for a child to begin strength training?

Research shows that children as young as six years of age can benefit from performing appropriate strength training exercises. As a coach or parent considering introducing resistance training to a young athlete(s), you must carefully evaluate the physical and emotional maturity and interest level of each participant.

Most children who are old enough to participate in organized sports and who have developed skills needed to follow instructions are ready for some type of strength training.

What training program is right for your athlete(s)?

The right strength training program for a child is not a scaled-down version of an adult workout. A youth strength training program should focus on:

- Correct technique;
- Controlled motions; and
- Less resistance and increased repetitions

Specific recommendations and guidelines for design and implementation of strength training routines for young athletes will be discussed in future articles.

Strength training is a fun, safe and appropriate part of a young athlete's total fitness program. For additional information contact the author at

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