

Get Active. Stay Active

I coach my son's hockey team. What types of physical activities off the ice should I focus on to help these young athletes reach their potential.

- *Steven
Milford*

By: Satu-Paivi Sipila, P.T., O.M.T.
Senior Physical Therapist, Rehabilitation Institute of Michigan

Research has shown that athletes involved in a well-planned physical performance enhancement program at a young age and early in their careers are at a distinct advantage in maximizing their potential and limiting the risk of injury. Unfortunately, many hockey players fail to develop their athletic ability fully, and instead focus only on improving their hockey skills. Parents, players, and coaches still mistakenly think that playing a lot of hockey is the only thing that the players need to get better and stay in shape.

Hockey requires balance, agility, power, and explosiveness in the form of full body effort and fine motor reactive movement. These parameters, as well as complimentary movements, must be done individually and progressively in order to develop the most well-rounded hockey player.

The ability to perform in hockey is based on several elements:

- Physical Ability
 - Endurance
 - Strength
 - Speed
 - Flexibility
 - Co-ordination
 - Agility
- Technical Skills
- Tactical Ability
- Body Structure
- Health
- Personal Characteristics
 - Intelligence
 - Psychological essence

Equal and balanced development of all these elements is needed for a maximum athletic performance.

By establishing a strong foundation of sound training principles (good habits), young players have a better chance at reaching higher levels in their performance, decreasing their potential for injury, and developing individual healthy and active behaviors that will last a lifetime. Reaching these players at a young age and helping them begin to

maximize their balance, core strength, and stability, as well as speed, power, quickness, and agility, will benefit the player in the long run. These may also prevent musculoskeletal injuries and degenerative diseases later in life.

In order to be able to work with a hockey player, we need to have enough knowledge about the sensitivity periods of physical training: when and how to train these elements in order to reach the best outcomes in the great game of hockey.

Please submit any questions you may have for our sports medicine experts by e-mailing cangelel@dmc.org. In the subject line, please write, "Get Active, Stay Active." We will respond to all the questions we receive and select one each month to feature in our column.

Voted by *U.S. News and World Report*, as one of "America's Best Hospitals," RIM is the largest provider and most trusted source for rehabilitation services in Michigan. RIM operates a 94-bed inpatient rehab hospital and 21 outpatient therapy sites throughout southeast Michigan. Visit our website at www.RIMrehab for a complete listing of outpatient services and locations or call 1-866-4MY-REHAB.