

ABSTRACT

The game of soccer has gained popularity and the number of participants worldwide has been estimated to be greater than 240 million. This significant increase and involvement shows that soccer is the most rapidly growing team sport, especially in the United States. In association with this increase in popularity comes the possibility of the participants being at an increased risk of becoming injured. However, the risk of injury decreases with increased levels of physical fitness, muscular strength and flexibility, and technical skill. Therefore, the purpose of this review was to examine the mechanisms of soccer injury, evaluate the influence of preseason conditioning on the incidence of soccer injury, and identify the components of a preseason training program that positively impact the risk of soccer injury. Coaches must understand the multifaceted nature of injury risk and should possess the skills necessary to identify and assess risk factors for injury. Most injuries occur during a game and a considerable number of injuries result from contact with another player and rule violations. Injury incidence is greater during the initial weeks of the competitive season, and the occurrence and severity of injuries is greater when players become fatigued. The components of a preseason training programs should address all psychological and physical aspects of the sport; and include sport-specific: cardiovascular conditioning, strength training, plyometric work, flexibility exercises, and technical skill development. When properly implements, well designed preseason training programs may positively impact a player's risk of injury and reduce the overall incidence of injury among soccer players.