Parents of Student Athletes

A growing number of student athletes are becoming addicted to painkillers after being prescribed pain medication for a sports-related injury. Children may be unaware of the consequences or long-term health risks of misusing prescription medicines. Below are some tips, facts and signs of misuse to help you and your children navigate the situation.

Here is what you can do:

- Educate yourself and your children about prescription drugs.
- Ask your physician about milder pain medication, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- If opioid painkillers are needed, ask your physician to prescribe the lowest effective dose and don’t take the drugs longer than needed.
- Rest and let injuries heal; do not play through pain.
- Avoid unsupervised access to painkillers.
- Parents and coaches should monitor, store and dispose of painkillers properly, utilizing Rx drop-off locations.

If you notice these signs, talk with your child’s provider about alternative medications:

- Red, watery eyes, large or small pupils
- Runny nose or hacking cough
- Cold, sweaty palms, shaky hands
- Poor physical coordination
- Puffy or pale face
- Changes in mood, weight and grades
- Lack of energy for practices, games, school or team activities

Fast Facts

- Common medicines that are prescribed: Vicodin, Oxycontin, Percocet, codeine, morphine, Demerol.
- By the time student-athletes are seniors in high school, about 11% have abused prescription painkillers.
- 80% of high school students misusing prescriptions got them from their physician.
- Studies have shown that taking acetaminophen and ibuprofen at the same time is safe and even provides greater pain relief.