



Jay S. Rabinowitz, MD
Brian B. Stanga, MD
Wanda Venters, MD
E. Jann Quaife, MD
Amy Gensler, MD
Lauren Finney, MD
David Higgins, MD
Richard Hayes, PA-C
Lauren Millet, PA-C
Arianna Groven, PA-C
Nathan Schulte, PA-C
Lindsey Einhorn, PhD
Crystal Joy, PsyD
Christina Knight, MA, LPC
Tracy Stam, RDN, CLE
Susie Gross, Administrator

303-841-2905
303-841-3052 (FAX)

www.parkerpediatrics.com

10371 Parkglenn Way
Suite 100
Parker, CO 80138



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Youth Sports—Special Edition

There are many reasons for kids to participate in sports. Most important is **fun and physical activity**. But learning peer relationships, teamwork, leadership skills, and building self esteem are also important. Unfortunately, early specialization has taken a lot of the fun away, as well as led to an epidemic of physical and mental injuries. We hope to shed some light on best practices, as well as try to convince parents to do what is best for their children—not what's best for the coach or the parent!

Stats

Only 0.03-0.5% of high school athletes make the pros. Only 1% receive college scholarships. And only 3-11% play college sports. **But 50% of athletes have injuries due to overuse, and 70% discontinue playing organized sports by age 13!** There are known reasons for the latter two stats—read below.

Problems and Solutions

- We mentioned above that the primary focus should be having fun and developing lifelong physical activity skills, but too often it is about getting scholarships (see above), winning, and economics (someone is making money since it certainly costs enough).
- Kids are not getting enough recovery time, which leads to both physical and psychological injuries. **A general rule should be at least three months off a year from a sport.** (One can play other sports during that time).
- **Kids should play a variety of sports, at least until late adolescence.** This decreases injury rate, burnout and stress (don't fool yourself—we encounter many teens who take marijuana daily to "treat" this stress). We have seen many kids who excelled at a sport they did not even play much until an older age.
- **Taking 1-2 days off each week from a particular sport** will decrease the injury rate too.
- The amount of injuries, and even surgeries, we see now is astounding. We fear that many of our youth will not be able to participate in physical activity by the time they retire, or at least without multiple artificial joints.
- The take home message—**early diversification—later specialization.** Recent studies have shown that those athletes who waited until after age 15 to specialize were more likely to be successful as an elite athlete.
- Sadly, it is rare to see kids playing a pick up game at the local park anymore. This is due to parental and coaching pressure to succeed at an early age, even though studies prove otherwise. There should be more recreational sports and fewer competitive ones, especially at the younger ages. Kids are being discouraged to play for fun or to try new activities, so they quit, and that leaves them doing more screen time and video gaming.

Meet Our New Providers

David Higgins, MD, joined our provider staff in January. Dr. Higgins attended CO State University, the University of CO Medical School, and did his Residency training at the University of Washington Seattle Children's Hospital. Originally from Virginia, he is married with one child and one on the way. He enjoys running, hiking, skiing, fly fishing, and ultimate Frisbee.



Christy Knight, MA, LPC, has joined our mental health department this month. She attended the University of Northern Colorado for both her BA and MA degrees. She is a Denver native, and is married with two children. Christy enjoys spending time with her family, hiking, swimming, camping, and reading.



This and That

Parker Pediatrics will again be a sponsor at **Parker Days, June 9-11.**

Summer appointments can now be made by calling our office.

We will again be awarding two **scholarships to graduating seniors** who plan to go into the healthcare field. Applications are on our website.

Allergy patients—remember to start your nasal sprays and antihistamines before symptoms get bad this spring.

We want to remind our patients that we have both **mental health services**, as well as **nutritional services**, in our office. These are covered the same as any other visit in our practice.

We know it is often convenient to go to “urgent care” centers, but it not usually cost effective. Most importantly, you will likely not receive the **quality of care** that we, your child(ren)’s pediatrician, can offer. And that is most important!

We are now able to prescribe **generic epinephrine injectors** which are significantly less expensive than the EpiPens. We will now do re-fills with this new option.

We routinely collect a urine sample on patients over 16 years of age at their annual exam to **check for STD’s**. We have had quite a few positives, most of whom have denied any sexual activity. Hmmm.

Friend us on **Facebook!**

“Quotable Quotes”

The following conversations occurred in our office.

15-year-old: “I’m not sure how I got an F in algebra, because I cheated off the guy sitting next to me and he got a C.”

5-year-old: “My ear hurts.”

Nurse: “What ear is it?”

5-year-old: “2017.”

Provider (examining foot): “This little piggy went to market, and this little piggy stayed home. Do you know where this little piggy went?”

5-year-old: “Kindergarten.”

10-year-old: “I can’t believe I’m already 10. It goes by so fast!”

Provider: “So, your name is Alexander, like Alexander Graham Bell?”

10-year-old: “I know him. He invented the cell phone.”

When a 9-year-old male seemed confused over what the provider asked him to do during his check up, his 7-year-old sister replied, “You must be new at this.”

If you enjoy these quotes, check out Dr. Rabinowitz’s book, [Cute Kidbits, Funny Conversations Kids Share With Their Pediatrician](#), for sale in our office or on Amazon.

Let’s Remember About Sports Nutrition Too

For pediatric and adolescent athletes, a well-balanced diet that is high in fruits and vegetables, including complex carbohydrates and sufficient lean protein, can be the difference in sport performance. A growing athlete needs more calories, as well as foods high in iron, calcium, and vitamin D. Girls need to watch for problems caused by overtraining, and under eating, such as missed periods.

A meal plan that includes 3 meals and 2-3 snacks a day helps sustain energy needs before, during, and after rigorous exercise. **There is a misconception that engineered sport performance products, such as sports drinks, high protein bars and shakes, are beneficial.** But only in the ultra high endurance athlete are these products potentially beneficial.

Sports enhancing products, such as creatine, are not recommended! Neither are supplements. Steroids will, without a doubt, take years off one’s life.