

Hospitals see a large portion of the United States population every year.

Approximately 60 percent of Americans visited a hospital or emergency room in 2010 according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention--over 20 million visits were for sports related injuries.

Heather Medley, a parent from Shallowater, Texas, said she has four kids involved in sports and understands the risks and rewards.

"I think the experiences far outweigh the risks for us," Medley said. "We play with people who love my kids and I know the other coaches would do right by my kids."

Medley said she trusts and respects the coaches who work with her kids. She said her kids belong to the Lubbock Church Athletic Association.

Medley said closely knit organizations are a good thing. She said knowing the other parents and kids is a positive for her and fosters unity within her community.

The Aspen Institute, an educational studies organization, reported the number of children involved in sports is declining. According to the institute, injuries were cited as a main concern.

Medley said sports safety is important to her.

"I think safety is always an issue," Medley said, as she crossed her arms and leaned on a table. "I want them to be safe, but I can't let my kids live in such a bubble that they don't have those experiences."

Far more injuries occur outside of sports related activities, Medley said, such as car accidents, home repair accidents, and falls.

Medley said sports today are more intense now than when she was young. She said more than ever, kids are coached to win.

"You play it to win," Medley said. "I guess I didn't pick that up when I was little."

She said regardless of the increasingly competitive atmosphere present in modern sports, she believes safety is still the number one concern.

Kory Brunson, the center manager for the Robert H. Ewalt Student Recreation Center, said he believes sports are safer than they use to be.

"When professional football first began," Brunson said, "They had double digits deaths every season. You don't see death in sports anymore."

Brunson said there is no denying sports have become safer throughout the years. He said he believes an emphasis on safety should remain important.

Brunson said good coaching and proper equipment are the most important things overall for safety.

He said emphasizing technology and parental consent are important as well.

"It's all up to the parent," Brunson said. "I am a proponent for kid's choice. Let them do what they want to do."

Brunson said letting kids choose is best, but responsibility for safety ultimately lies with the parents.

He said injuries are a liability when participating in sports.

Brad Ewesiobi, a junior petroleum engineering major from Manteca, Calif., said he believes safety varies with the sport.

"Overall," Ewesiobi said, "I think football is the only problem. I don't think they'll ever be able to make it safe enough to where everyone is happy."

Ewesiobi said he would be somewhat hesitant to allow his future children to play football. He said it comes down to personal safety.

He said most of the other major sports are fairly safe, and he was comfortable playing sports while in high school.

"I see technology as more of an option for safety," Ewesiobi said. "But if you change sports too much, no one will like them."

On the Web:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention -

<http://www.cdc.gov>

The Aspen Institute -

<http://www.aspenprojectplay.org>

Sidebar

Athletes encounter sports injuries in all phases of their lives.

Matthew Henderson, a sophomore agricultural economics major from Lubbock, said he witnessed an incident at football practice in middle school.

"This kid blitzed from the goal line while practicing defense," Henderson said. "He turned around and jumped straight into the pole."

Henderson said he had never seen a severe sports injury before.

"The coaches ran over to him," Henderson said. "He wasn't moving."

Henderson said an ambulance was called immediately after his teammate was unresponsive.

"He was pretty much well taken care of," Henderson said. "His family was escorted to the hospital and he came to school three days later."

He said he realized the importance of having proper safety precautions after that event.

John L. Hawley

Sources:

Heather Medley - 806-441-3757

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Brad Ewesiobi - 209-390-5653

Matthew Henderson - 806-543-6943

Research:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/hospital.htm>

Sources:

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Heather

"I think the experiences far outweigh the risks for us,"

*Confident in answers. Crossed arms.

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coaches would do right by my kids."

"I think safety is always an issue,"

"I want them to be safe, but I can't let my kids live in
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Kory

"When professional football first began, they had double
digits deaths every season,"

"You don't see death in sports anymore."

*knowledgeable and laid-back

Brad

"Overall, I think football is the only problem,"

"But if you change sports too much, no one will like them."

*Reserved, with a general sports knowledge

Matthew

*Good story for sidebar, poor interviewee