



Preparing for Sports Emergencies

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You are covering a wrestling tournament. As you watch the last match of the night, one of the wrestlers is thrown to the mat by his opponent, violently striking his head. He lies motionless on the mat, and the referee stops the match. You rush to the side of the athlete. Are you prepared? Are there other personnel on site to assist you? Is an ambulance needed, and, if so, who will call? Do you know what EMS professionals will be responding to the scene? And are you all in agreement with the procedures to follow in order to provide the best care for the athlete?

Proper management of emergencies in sports does not happen by accident. Preparation is the key to ensuring that the appropriate resources and procedures exist to ensure the best care possible. Preparation for sports emergencies is a dynamic process, and planning should begin well in advance of the injury, game, or even the season.

There are many factors that should be considered when preparing for sports emergencies. In order to address each of these factors, the acronym PREPARE can be used. PREPARE emphasizes the critical elements of emergency planning: personnel, rules, equipment, planning, arena, rehearsal, and evaluate and educate. Each of these critical elements must be addressed when developing an emergency action plan (EAP) for sports emergencies.

PERSONNEL

Who are the members of your sports emergency care team? This question may be answered differently depending on the level of play and the size of the institution. For instance, a sports emergency care team in the National Football League may have more members than a small high school. All personnel must be identified and included in the preparation and planning process, regardless of the size of the venue or the number of members of the team. It is important that each member of the team understands the qualifications, expertise, and limitations of the other members. It is equally important for all team members to be comfortable with the capabilities and