

TRAINING TIP OF THE WEEK

DO I NEED TO "BACK" OFF MY TRAINING?

Back pain is a very common complaint among young athletes, and it is important to know when the pain can be played through or when it is time for evaluation and treatment. Specifically among adolescents, it is very uncommon for back pain to be due to a simple muscle strain because their weakest part of their back are their growth plates and not their muscles. Stress fractures in the spine called spondylolysis account for up to 50% of all back pain in young athletes. Repetitive twisting and hyperextension of the spine



are thought to lead to this injury and athletes participating in gymnastics, volleyball, soccer, dance, softball, and football are at the highest risk. If an athlete's back pain is persistent and worse with bending backwards, he or she should be evaluated for this injury. Many times simple xrays will not reveal this injury and other specialized tests are needed. If diagnosed early, conservative treatment is usually successful and therapy involves strengthening the core muscles around the spine to stabilize the back and sometimes bracing to relieve pain. If these back symptoms are ignored and not treated properly, an athlete can be left with chronic back pain or other disability.

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