

Playing Smart Soccer Q & A

Q: What is *Playing Smart Soccer*?

A: ThinkFirst Canada's *Playing Smart Soccer/Du Soccer Intelligent* is a bilingual injury prevention program developed to promote safe soccer for soccer players aged 6-14. This program was written for parents, coaches, teachers, and officials.

Q: What age group does it target?

A: Although this booklet has been designed for players from 6-14 years old, most of the information contained in the booklet is applicable to soccer players of all ages and skill sets. ThinkFirst chose to focus on younger players because this group is at greater risk of serious injury such as concussion. For instance, children under 12 should avoid heading the ball as their thinner skulls and weaker necks cannot absorb or dissipate forces applied to the neck.

Q: Why Soccer?

A: Soccer is the world's most popular sport, but carries risk of injury to players, especially younger ones. In 1999, soccer was rated second among the top 5 sports that led children under 19 to emergency rooms. ThinkFirst's message is that injuries are preventable. We encourage participation in the healthy activities of childhood, but want to ensure kids are trained, wearing safety gear and using their brains to navigate risks.

Q: Who designed this program?

A: The program was designed with the guidance of the ThinkFirst Smart Soccer Committee that includes sports medicine physicians and neurosurgeons, as well as sponsoring organizations, such as the Canadian Soccer Association.

Q: How do you reach players?

A: ThinkFirst recently promoted the *Playing Smart Soccer* program at the 2009 Canadian Academy of Sport Medicine conference in Vancouver, BC. This conference attracts sports medicine specialists from across the country; ThinkFirst provided this group with valuable injury prevention information to pass on through networks in their own communities.

Q: What are your plans for the program in the future?

A: Thanks to generous funding from Ronald McDonald House Charities, this program is now available free of charge online at thinkfirst.ca. Broadening access to this resource will allow its important injury prevention message to reach more young soccer players across the Canada.