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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SPORTS SAFETY IS A TEAM EFFORT

TUPELO, Miss. –Certified athletic trainers with North Mississippi Medical Center are joining the National Athletic Trainers Association in offering parents tips to help their children reduce the risk for common sports-related injuries.

“Sports injuries are a problem at any age, but kids playing increasingly competitive sports in school are especially at risk,” said Walter Wilkins, ATC, who coordinates NMMC’s Sports Medicine Program. March is National Athletic Training Month with the theme of “Sports Safety is a Team Effort.”

NMMC provides certified athletic trainers at 14 area high schools, including Ingomar, North Pontotoc, Pontotoc, South Pontotoc, Tupelo, Houlka, Tupelo Christian Preparatory School, Mantachie, Baldwin, Saltillo, Mooreville, Nettleton, Tremont and Itawamba Agricultural High School, as well as Itawamba Community College.

Keep Kids Safe

- Assess the financial and time impact on your family. In the excitement of having your child participate in organized sports, the family must consider the family commitment required. If not prepared, the time and financial commitment can lead to increased stress on the family making a positive sports experience a negative one.
- Determine if your children are physically and mentally “in shape.” Parents, with assistance from coaches, should determine whether their children are physically and psychologically conditioned for the sport level they’re playing. Do not push children into something they do not want to do.
- Obtain a physical examination for your child. All children should receive both a general medical exam and an orthopedic screening, which will determine their readiness to play and uncover any condition that may limit participation. NMMC offers free physicals to area student athletes every May.
- Find out who’s taking care of your kids. In the case of injury, find out who will provide care and ask to review their credentials. Many schools and sports teams rely

on athletic trainers or parents with medical and first aid training and certification to keep kids safe. Yet less than half of high schools have access to athletic trainers.

- Provide coaches with your child's medical history. Parents should complete an emergency medical authorization form, providing parent contact information and permission for emergency medical care for their children. Check with your school or athletic league to obtain the form.
- Make sure your children are eating and drinking to win. Parents should ensure their children are eating a healthy, balanced diet. Without proper nutrition and hydration, young athletes will feel sluggish, which can increase their chance of injury. Improper hydration also increases the risk of heat illness.
- Ascertain coaches' qualifications. A background check should always be performed on coaches and volunteers before they are allowed to work with children. Coaches should have background and knowledge in the sport they are coaching. They should be credentialed if that is a requirement in the state, conference or league. All coaches should have cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), automated external defibrillator (AED) and first aid training. Coaches should strictly enforce the sports rules and have a plan for dealing with emergencies.
- Ask if the school or league has an emergency action plan. Every team should have a written emergency action plan, reviewed by the athletic trainer or local Emergency Medical Service. Individual assignments and emergency equipment and supplies need to be included in the emergency action plan. If an athletic trainer is not employed by the school or sport league, qualified individuals need to be present to render care. Knowing that a school has prepared for emergency will give parents peace of mind.

For more information, call the NMMC Sports Medicine Program at (662) 377-5469 or 1-800-THE DESK (1-800-843-3375).