Football is the most popular high school sport for boys, based on participation. In the U.S., there are:

- 3 million youth football athletes
- 14,150+ high school football programs
- 1.1 million high school football athletes
- 670 NCAA football teams
- 72,000+ collegiate football athletes

**A Look at Football Injuries**

- College football athletes have higher injury rates than high school football athletes.
- 47% of high school injuries and 61% of college injuries occurred during practice.
- **Concussions, knee sprains and ankle sprains** are the most common injuries in football.
  - Knee injuries in football players account for 15% of all high school injuries.
  - Knee injuries were identified in 54% of college athletes attending the NFL predraft combine.
  - Five of every 100 players ages 6 to 17 sustaining a football-related concussion each season.
  - The risk of knee sprains increases as competition levels increase, with the highest risk occurring in college football.
  - 3 to 4% of injuries in football players ages 5 to 18 are considered to be overuse injuries.

**Factors of Injury Prevention**

- Increasing a youth football team’s roster size may help reduce head-impact exposure for individual players.
- It is important to have an athletic trainer available at both practices and competitions to serve as the health care professional and advocate for the health and safety of athletes.
- 30% of secondary schools and 80% of youth football teams have no access to athletic trainers.
- Full-time athletic trainers provide more athletic training services and detect more injuries in football players than outreach-only athletic trainers.
- Cross training and playing multiple sports can reduce injury.
  - In the 2018 NFL draft, 31 of the 32 first-round picks played multiple sports in high school.
- Athletes must focus on their overall health. Proper nutrition, hydration and sleep are critically important for youth athletes.

Source: National Athletic Trainers’ Association, the Journal of Athletic Training

Infographic provided by the National Athletic Trainers’ Association