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More Teen Athletes Receiving Major League Shoulder Surgery Because of Overuse

CLEARWATER, Fla. – March 3, 2017 – It's a surgery that was made famous by major league slugger, Tommy John. In 1974, John's orthopaedic surgeon kept him in the game with a then radical procedure, replacing the ulnar collateral ligament in his elbow with a tendon from somewhere else in the body. It worked, and John went on to have a record career.

However, these days more and more 'Tommy John' surgeries are being performed on young athletes. In fact, according to the American Journal of Sports Medicine, nearly 60 percent of 'Tommy John' surgeries performed in 2015 were for patients between the ages of 15 and 19.

"What we are really seeing is more and more overuse injuries with teen athletes, because they are only playing one sport. It used to be that kids would play football or soccer in the fall, hockey in the winter and then baseball in the spring. However, now a lot of teens are playing baseball and throwing year-round, and that puts tremendous strain on the arm and elbow", said David Thompson, M.D. an orthopaedic surgeon with Orthopaedic Associates of West Florida.

One recent study found that baseball players between the ages of 9 and 12 years old are throwing upwards of 600 pitches a season, or more than 75 in one game. Over time, that breaks down the ligaments in the arm and elbow, creating pain, and eventually requiring surgery.

"I recommend conservative treatment first, starting with rest and strengthening exercises. However, in many young athletes, surgery is really the only option if they want to continue athletics. It is only necessary for elite throwers, and the recovery time needs to be considered as well. Most athletes will be out for nine months to a year. So that is especially important for high school age athletes and their parents to take into consideration", said Dr. Thompson.

Dr. Thompson says there are also ways to prevent injuries to the ulnar collateral ligament.

"The biggest cause is overuse and also poor mechanics. You want to make sure you are warming up properly, adhering to pitch count guidelines, and if you are in pain, see a doctor, so that an injury can be caught early."

For more information about visit www.orthowestfl.com or call 727-461-6026.

About Orthopaedic Associates of West Florida:

At Orthopaedic Associates of West Florida, our family of board-certified physicians have been taking care of bay area patients for more than 30 years. We merge state-of-the-art technology with unsurpassed physician skills. OAWF provides patients with complete care offering two in-house MRI locations, X-ray at each of our four offices, Bone Densitometry, EMG/NCV, Physical

and Hand Therapy and an Orthotics/Prosthetics department. We have four convenient locations to serve patients across the entire bay area.

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