

U.S. Soccer eliminates headers for players under 11

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U.S. Soccer has announced the adoption of a series of safety initiatives aimed at addressing concussions in youth soccer, including rules that will strictly prohibit players 10 and younger from heading the ball, and will reduce headers in practice for 11- to 13-year-old players.

The regulations will be mandatory for U.S. Soccer youth national teams and academies, including M.L.S. youth club teams. The guidelines resolve a proposed class-action lawsuit filed against U.S. Soccer and others last year.

The rules changes come just 17 months after the Concussion Legacy Foundation and the Santa Clara Institute of Sports Law and Ethics (ISLE) launched the [Safer Soccer](#) campaign to delay the introduction of headers until high school.

Safer Soccer has amassed considerable public support including from U.S. soccer legends Brandi Chastain, Taylor Twellman and Cindy Parlow Cone, top concussion experts, and dozens of organizations including the National Alliance for Youth Sports.

"These guidelines are a major victory for the Safer Soccer campaign and a fantastic first step in making the world's most popular sport safer to play for children," said Concussion Legacy Foundation Founding Executive Director Chris Nowinski. "Together the supporters of the Safer Soccer campaign showed there is widespread support for the elimination of headers for children, and U.S. Soccer heard our message."

"We're thrilled that progress is being made, but there is more we can do," added Concussion Legacy Foundation Founding Medical Director Robert Cantu. "Research has shown that delaying the introduction of headers to age 14 would prevent over 35,000 concussions in middle school players per year. These new rules still leave many of those middle schoolers at risk, so we will continue to campaign to raise the age further."