

SPORTS SAFETY TIPS

Everything you need to know to keep your kids safe while playing sports.

Participation in sports offers tremendous social, emotional and physical benefits for children. We know that one of the worst things for kids is being on the sidelines with an injury. As Parents and Coaches, there are simple things we can do to help reduce preventable injuries—so our kids can continue playing the games they love.

Be a Prepared Coach

- As a coach, establish safety guidelines that athletes and parents can follow during every practice and game, such as creating hydration breaks, encouraging players to sit out if injured, resting if not feeling well and facilitating a proper warm up.

Don't Forget to Warm Up and Stretch Before Games and Practices

- Make sure time is set aside before every practice and game for athletes to warm up properly.
- Stretching before practice and games can release muscle tension and help prevent sports-related injuries, such as muscle tears and sprains.
- Kids should start with about 10 minutes of jogging or any light activity, then stretch all major muscle groups, holding each stretch for 20 to 30 seconds. This increases circulation to cold muscles, improves flexibility and makes muscles less prone to strain or tear.

Make Rest a Priority

- To help avoid overuse injury, rest all players during practices and games.
- Encourage players to communicate any pain, injury or illness they may have during or after any practices or games. Make sure they know its smart to tell coaches and parents if they are hurt or not feeling well.
- Kids should have at least one to two days off from any particular sport each week.
- Take time off from one sport to prevent overuse injuries. It is important to get stronger and develop skills learned in another sport.
- Encourage kids to play a variety of sports to help balance muscle development and prevent mental fatigue, otherwise known as “burnout”.

Wear Appropriate Sports Gear

- Having kids wear the appropriate and properly-fitted sports gear during practice and games can help avoid minor and sever injuries.
- Make sure athletes have the right equipment and are wearing it for both practice and games. The right equipment may include helmets, shin guards, mouth guards, ankle braces, shoes with rubber cleats and sunscreen.

Don't Take Chances with the Brain

- Learn the signs and symptoms of a concussion. This information is important for coaches, parents and athletes.
- A player with a suspected concussion must be immediately sidelined until evaluated and released by a medical professional. The important thing is to protect players who have had a concussion from having another one.
- A good rule of thumb; **WHEN IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT.**