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.
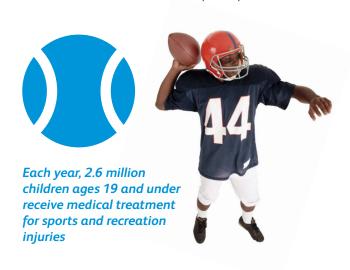
Prepare Kids for the Demands of Playing a Sport

- Before playing organized sports, make sure your child receives a pre-participation physical exam, or PPE, performed by a doctor, nurse practitioner or qualified clinician under the supervision of a physician. Whoever performs the exam, the same practices should be followed, including the need for a medical history.

- In case of an emergency, provide your athlete's coaches with important information (phone numbers, doctor information and allergy information).

- Meet with the coaches before the first practice to inform them of history with asthma or other medical conditions that require special attention.

Each year, 2.6 million children ages 19 and under receive medical treatment for sports and recreation injuries

Warm Up and Stretch Before Games and Practices

- Coaches should set aside time 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.

- Athletes should start with about 10 minutes of jogging or any light activity, and then stretch all major muscle groups, holding for 20 to 30 seconds.

Remember to Hydrate

- Learn the signs and symptoms of dehydration and other forms of heat illness.

- Send athletes to practice and games with a water bottle and encourage them to stay well hydrated by drinking plenty of water before, during and after play.

- Encourage athletes to drink fluids 30 minutes before activity begins and every 15-20 minutes during activity.

- If you're a coach, establish mandatory water breaks throughout practice and games – don't wait for athletes to tell you they're thirsty.

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Wear Appropriate Sports Gear

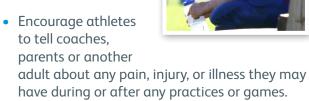- Use appropriate and properly-fitted sports gear to prevent or reduce the severity of injuries.

- Make sure athletes use the correct equipment in order to participate in both practices and games. This may include helmets, shin guards, mouth guards, ankle braces, shoes with rubber cleats and sunscreen.

Don't Take Chances with the Brain: Know the Signs and Symptoms of Concussions

- Learn the signs and symptoms of a concussion at www.safekids.org. This information is important for coaches, parents and athletes.

- An athlete with a suspected concussion must be removed from play until evaluated and cleared by a medical professional.

- A good rule of thumb: When in doubt, sit them out.

Make Rest a Priority

- To help avoid overuse injury, athletes should take breaks during practices and games.

- Encourage athletes to tell coaches, parents or another adult about any pain, injury, or illness they may have during or after any practices or games.

- Athletes should take at least one or two days off each week from any particular sport.

- Encourage athletes to take time off from one particular sport to prevent overuse injuries. It is an opportunity to develop skills learned in another sport and strengthen different muscle groups.

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.

- It's a good idea for coaches to get certified in first aid and CPR and have a stocked first aid kit available at all practices and games.

- Coaches should consider increasing their sports skills and knowledge with free sports safety training at a Safe Kids Sports Safety Clinic.

Be a Supportive Parent

- Learn ways to help your child stay injury free and healthy while playing sports.

- Attend a sports safety clinic in your area, such as ones held by Safe Kids across the United States, which provide coaches and parents with ways to keep young athletes healthy and injury free throughout their sporting careers.

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