



# Sports Safety Tips

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

Participation in youth sports offers tremendous social, emotional and physical benefits. We know that one of the toughest things for kids is being sidelined 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, by a doctor. This can help rule out any potential medical conditions that may place your young athlete at risk.
- Just in case of an emergency, share contact information (phone numbers, doctor information and allergy information) with your athlete's coaches.
- If your athlete has any history of asthma or other medical conditions that require special attention, meet with the coach before the first practice.



## Warm Up and Stretch Before Games and Practices

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

## Remember to Hydrate

- Learn the signs and symptoms of dehydration and other forms of heat illness.
- Have your kids bring a water bottle to practice and games. Encourage children to stay well hydrated by drinking plenty of water before, during and after play.
- Encourage your athletes to drink fluids (water is the best option) 30 minutes before the activity begins and every 15-20 minutes during activity.
- If you're a coach, mandatory fluid breaks during practice and games are a great idea – don't wait for your athletes to tell you they're thirsty.



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

## Wear Appropriate Sports Gear

- Having kids wear the appropriate and properly-fitted sports gear during practice and games can help avoid minor and serious injuries.
- Make sure athletes have the right equipment and are wearing it for both practices 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: Know the Signs and Symptoms of Concussions

- 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 getting another one.
- A good rule of thumb: when in doubt, sit them out.

## 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 it's smart to tell coaches, parents or another adult if they're hurt or not feeling well.



- Kids should have at least one or two days off from any particular sport each week.
- An off-season is important, too. It is recommended that kids get 10 consecutive weeks of rest from any one sport every year. Playing different sports throughout the year is OK.

## 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 also a good idea for coaches to get certified in first aid and CPR and have a stocked first aid kit handy at all practices and games.
- Coaches should consider adding to 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. These clinics, such as ones held by Safe Kids across the United States, provide coaches and parents with ways to keep young athletes healthy and injury free throughout their sporting careers.
- Visit [www.safekids.org/sports](http://www.safekids.org/sports) to receive more tips and resources on youth sports safety and to find a sports safety clinic or Safe Kids coalition near you.