

Top 10 questions parents have about sports injuries



1. How can sports injuries be prevented?

Overuse causes many sports injuries, like strains and inflammation. Here are some ways to prevent sports injuries:

- Make sure that young athletes have correctly fitted safety gear. The coach should teach the athlete how to wear and check safety gear. Shoes are part of safety gear and should fit securely. Wear sports-specific shoes.
- The athlete should have a good nutrition and hydration plan for before, during and after practice or games.
- Athletes need a pre-season plan to help get their bodies ready for play. Start the program at least 6-8 weeks before the season begins. Pre-season plans include:
 - Flexibility
 - Strength
 - Balance and coordination
 - Endurance
 - Agility

When athletes haven't exercised for a while, they aren't ready to play. One can't expect to go from being a 'couch potato' to playing high-level sports. Athletes will get hurt without a good training program.

- Know your coaches:
 - Find out about the coach's training and make sure they stay current
 - Learn how they fit safety gear
 - Make sure he or she is cleared to work with children
- Coaches should:
 - Know their athletes— workouts and goals should be specific to each athlete's abilities
 - Check playing area prior to practice or games

2. How many hours a week should a young athlete train?

Overtraining occurs when an athlete does the same skills repeatedly. They become physically or mentally exhausted.

Age-specific training guidelines:

3-4 years	2 times a week	30-45 min (with games)
5-7 years	2 to 3 times a week	45-60 minutes (with games)
8-12 years	3 times a week	1 to 2 hours (with games)
13-18 years	4 to 5 times a week	1.5 to 2 hours (with games)

Change your sport:

- Playing different sports will decrease the risk of overuse injuries. Playing the same sport year-round increases the risk of injury.
- Vary sports to work different muscle groups. Example: If playing a throwing sport (baseball, quarterback), change to leg-focused sport (soccer, cross country).
- Athletes can have a primary sport, but they should rest from that sport at least 3-4 months per year.
- Know the limits and guidelines of each sport. Guidelines, like the number of pitches per week for baseball, running distances for track and swimming strokes for swimmers, help prevent overuse injuries.
- Guidelines need to be followed in games and weekly practices.
- Many teenage athletes quit sports because of low-grade pain. Low-grade pain can be a result of poor training and overtraining. "Dropouts" can be prevented with good training.

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Top 10 questions parents have about sports injuries, cont.

3. What can be done after an injury to decrease its severity?

The best thing to do right after an injury is to P.R.I.C.E.

P = Protect

R = Rest

I = Ice

C = Compress

E = Elevate

- Ice the injured area 15-20 minutes with elevation and compression. Repeat 15-20 minutes of ice every hour.
- Keep the injured area protected.
- Ice every hour while awake for 48-72 hours. Keep using ice if there is persistent swelling or pain with weight-bearing activities.
- Notify primary care physician if unable to control pain.

4. What can I do to help if my child is in pain?

- Ice the painful area for 15-20 minutes at a time. Repeat every hour as needed.
- You can give acetaminophen or ibuprofen, as long as your child is not allergic.
 - Acetaminophen: Every 4 to 6 hours – 10/mg/kg of body weight
 - Ibuprofen: Every 6 hours – 10/mg/kg of body weight

5. When should ice or heat be used on an injury?

Ice:

- Apply ice for the first 48-72 hours after injury.
- Use ice when there is sharp pain.
- Use ice with swelling.
- Use ice after a workout or game to prevent pain. For example, icing a pitcher's shoulder. Do not ice before a practice or game. Icing numbs the body. The athlete will not feel the iced area, which may result in injury.

- Keep a thin cloth between the ice and the injured area. Use a pillowcase, washrag or T-shirt.

Heat:

- Heat helps relieve stiffness before a practice or game.
- Heat warms the muscle. It reduces muscle strains.
- Heat is good for a dull/achy pain.
- Do not use heat on a body part if there is swelling.

6. How long should my child rest after an injury?

Your child should:

- Rest until there isn't any pain.
- Be able to walk and run without a limp, and throw without pain before returning to playing a sport.
- Your child should not play while injured.

7. Is bracing or taping an injured area helpful?

A body part should be protected when:

- There is an unstable joint
- There is a joint that needs better body awareness (proprioception)
- Braces or elastic sleeves can be superior to taping. Taping stretches out after just 5 to 10 minutes of play.
- Do not brace or tape a joint that is not injured. The brace "takes over" for the supporting muscles, so muscles become weaker. There is a higher risk of joint injury.
- A trained coach or athletic trainer needs to tape the joint. Taping the joint incorrectly can cause injury.
- Have a training program in place. Training improves muscle strength and body awareness of the supported joint. This helps your child wean from the brace or tape.

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8. How do you know when an athletic shoe is a good fit?

Recommendations for a good-fitting athletic shoe:

- Snug fit at the back (heel) and middle (mid-foot); room in the front (forefoot) to allow toes to spread when standing.
- Shoe is longer (0.5-0.75 inch) than the longest toe.
- The shoe arch matches the athlete's natural arch.
- When the shoe is on, the foot should line up with the sole.
- A wide and flared heel is more stable. Only use rounded heels for specific sports.
- A straight shaped shoe is best for flat-feet. This is called a straight last shoe. A curved shaped shoe is best for high-arched feet. This is called a curved last.
- A good-fitting athletic shoe will NOT:
 - Cause blisters
 - Cause red areas that last more than 20 minutes
 - Allow the foot to slip or move freely
- A good-fitting shoe will:
 - Be pain-free and sore-free
 - Keep the foot stable during play
- Shoes must be tied correctly. This supports the foot and prevents injuries. This means:
 - Laced fully
 - Tied snug

9. When should an athlete seek medical help for an injury?

Seek medical help when your athlete:

- Cannot put weight on the injured body part.
- Has a clear deformity of the arm or leg (fracture, dislocation, etc.)

- Tells you about persistent swelling (edema) or pain.
- Has signs and symptoms of a concussion:
 - Reports fatigue
 - Cannot focus on a task or work
 - Headaches
 - Sensitive to light or noise
- Is not able to play without pain.
- Injures the same area a second time.
- Has questions about the injury.

10. Who do I call and where do I go to get medical help?

- **Emergency room** – All medical emergencies (see above for conditions) should be treated immediately.
- **Urgent Care facility** – An after-hours option for uncontrolled swelling (edema) and pain. During business hours, call your primary care physician.
- **Primary care physician** – All injuries need to be reported to a primary care physician. They can tell you if an office visit is needed.
- **Orthopedic specialist** – For athletes is in need of a higher level of orthopedic care. Insurance may require a primary care physician to provide a referral.
- **Rehabilitation services (physical therapy or occupational therapy)** – Used to provide a guided and progressive return to activities. Any treatment requires a referral from a physician.

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