

Prepare. Prevent. Play.



Safe Kids Youth Sports Safety Campaign

Injuries in youth sports are occurring at an alarming rate.

In fact, according to the National Institute of Health:

- More than 38 million children participate in sports each year in the United States and
- Approximately 3.5 million receives medical treatment for a sports-related injury.
- Experts say as many as half of these injuries are preventable.

Tips for Parents, Coaches and League Organizers

- **Pre-Season Medical Screening:** Every child should receive an annual pre-participation physical evaluation (PPE). These exams help identify underlying conditions the young athlete may have and help parents, coaches and doctors make more informed decisions about physical activity of the athlete. Parents need to talk to their child's doctor and ask them to perform the full pre-participation evaluation, updated and recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- **Safety gear:** To prevent minor or serious injuries, children playing sports should have access to and consistently use the appropriate, well-maintained, and properly fitted safety equipment for the sport during practice and play.
- **Qualified coaching:** Coaches should be trained in both first aid and CPR, have a plan for responding to emergencies, and have current knowledge of both safety rules and proper equipment use. Sports programs with certified Athletic Trainers on staff are ideal because they are trained to prevent injuries and provide immediate care for athletic injuries.
- **Proper Conditioning:** To prevent acute and overuse injuries, coaches should teach young athletes proper routines for both warm-ups and cool-downs before and after practice and play. Sixty-two percent of sports-related injuries occur during practice rather than in a game.
- **Hydration:** Athletes should be encouraged to drink water before, during and after practice and competition. Parents are advised to make sure their child drinks about 12 ounces of fluid 30 minutes before activity begins and every 15-20 minutes during activity. Encourage mandatory fluid breaks every 15-20 minutes throughout physical activity—don't wait for the child to tell you he/she is thirsty.
- **Rest:** If young athletes are very tired or in pain, coaches and parents should encourage them to rest, not to play, as this valuable recovery time can help prevent acute and overuse injuries.

For more information and resources on keeping young athletes safe and injury free, visit Safe Kids Pennsylvania at www.pasafekids.org.

