

Tips for Reducing Risk of Injury

- Get a preseason physical examination (PPE). The pre-participation physical is not meant to disqualify your child from sports but to be sure your child can safely participate.
- Be in proper physical condition to play the sport. Develop a pre-participation fitness routine that builds overall strength, endurance, and flexibility.
- Know and abide by the rules of the sport. Help your child review the rules of the sport. Make sure he/she understands the rules for his/her safety, sportsmanship, and effective play of the game.
- Wear appropriate protective gear for the sport (e.g., shin guards for soccer, hard-shell helmet when facing a softball or baseball pitcher, helmet with face mask and body pads for football, etc.). Make sure equipment is up-to-date and fits your child properly.
- Know how to use athletic equipment properly. This includes protective gear and work-out equipment, such as weight training equipment.
- Warm up before playing and cool down afterwards. Gentle stretching of the arms and legs before and after a game is an essential tool for preventing injury.
- Avoid playing when very tired or in pain. Remind your child to report any pain felt during practice or competition. Close observation and quick response to pain can help your child avoid the emergency room and enjoy the sport to its fullest. Also, talk with your child about avoiding inflated expectations (and, as a parent, don't create expectations that are too high). When a child feels pressured by peers, coaches, or parents, he/she may try to play through the pain, promoting further injury.
- Make sure there is adequate water or other liquid for maintaining proper hydration. Peak performance requires unlimited access to water during hot weather. Dehydrated athletes can suffer severe medical complications.

Sources:

1. Mayo Clinic (1998). Pre-participation physicals: Making sure a young athlete can play safely [on-line]. Available: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/findinformation/conditioncenters/invoke.cfm?objectid=2237B71A-8AA6-4132-BC97F02D6982CE1D>
2. Clark, N. (1997). Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook, (2nd edition). Brookline, MA: Human Kinetics.

