



Sports Overuse Injury Tip Sheet

Everything you need to know to keep your kids safe from overuse injuries.

We know kids love to play their favorite sports as much as possible. But playing the same sport multiple times a week, for long hours, without any break in between play or seasons can cause long term damage. These are called overuse injuries and they can be prevented with a few simple tips.



Children who participate in two or more sports where similar muscles are used, like swimming and baseball, are at higher risk of overuse injuries than those who participate in sports with different muscle emphasis, like track and golf.

Know What to Look For

- Overuse injuries can be very subtle, making their detection difficult. Examples include: Achilles tendinitis, runner's knee, shin splints or pitching elbow.

Consider a Pre-Season Program

- When starting a new sport, consider having kids participate in a pre-season conditioning program or camp to gradually build strength and endurance.
- Increase the intensity, distance or duration of the sport by about 10 percent each week. This allows the body to rest, rebuild, recover and avoid injury.

Don't Forget to Warm Up and Stretch

- Make sure there is time set aside 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, such as muscle tears or sprains.
- 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. This increases circulation to cold muscles, improves flexibility and makes muscles less prone to strain or tear.



Make Rest a Priority

- Kids should have at least one or two days off from any particular sport each week.
- Take time off from one sport to prevent overuse injuries. It is an opportunity to get stronger and develop skills learned in another sport.

Mix it Up

- Encourage kids to play a variety of sports to help balance muscle development, prevent mental fatigue, otherwise known as “burnout,” and decrease the risk of overuse injuries.
- During an off-season, cross-train with other sports and activities to keep fit or consider an alternative workout schedule with hard and easy routines.
- Playing different sports throughout the year will make kids well-rounded athletes.



Communicate and Respond Quickly to Injuries

- Encourage athletes 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.
- Consult a doctor if the pain does not go away after a day or two. Use ice and anti-inflammatory medications to help reduce pain and swelling. A child should return to play only after evaluated and cleared by a medical professional.
- Remember, quick and proper treatment can mean a shorter recovery time and faster return to play.



To learn more about sports-specific overuse injuries, visit the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine go to www.STOPSportsinjuries.org

To learn more about knee injury prevention through Santa Monica Orthopaedic Group's PEP Program (Prevent Injury and Enhance Performance), go to www.smogknee.com/pepprogram.html

To learn more about sports safety, go to www.safekids.org