

## On the Safe Side

### KIDS AND SPORTS



For many children, being part of a team and participating in organized sports is a significant part of growing up. Taking part in athletics helps children to develop social and team-building skills and contributes to their sense of well-being. Additionally, regular exercise is likely to decrease a child's risk of becoming obese or developing diabetes as well as to establish healthy physical activity habits for life.

#### COMMON INJURIES

Although in most cases the benefits of participating in sports outweigh the risks, there is always the possibility of injury. The majority of sports injuries affects muscles, tendons, and ligaments and are caused by abnormal stress placed on joints, bones, muscles, or tendons. Broken bones account for only five percent of sports injuries.

#### TIPS FOR AVOIDING SPORTS-RELATED INJURY

The American Academy of Pediatrics stresses the following injury prevention tips to help parents promote a safe sports experience for children.

- ★ Take breaks. Rest periods during practice and games can reduce injuries and prevent heat-related illness.
- ★ Play safe. Rules of the game should always be strictly enforced.
- ★ Stop the activity if there is pain.
- ★ Avoid heat injury. Drink plenty of fluid before, during and after exercise or play. Wear light clothing and decrease or stop practices or competitions during periods of high heat and humidity.
- ★ Wear the right gear. Players should wear appropriate and properly fit protective equipment such as pads, helmets, face guards, and eyewear.
- ★ Strengthen muscles. Conditioning exercises before games and during practice strengthens muscles used in play.
- ★ Increase flexibility. Stretching warm muscles before and after games or practice can increase flexibility.
- ★ Use the proper technique. This should be reinforced during the playing season.

#### SPORTS MEDICINE

Sports injuries to bones, muscles, joints and ligaments are frequently different in children and adolescents than in adults. In some cases, a child may need the expertise of a pediatric sports medicine specialist who is equipped to diagnose and treat the unique medical needs of growing children. These specialists treat conditions including dislocations; tendonitis; exercise-induced asthma; concussions; and stress fractures.

REMEMBER TO KEEP A FIRST-AID KIT AND EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS HANDY AT ALL TIMES. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SAFETY AND INJURY PREVENTION, CONSULT YOUR CHILD'S PEDIATRICIAN.

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Habits learned as children can have long-range effects on health. Overweight or inactive children and adolescents are more likely to become overweight or inactive adults, who are at increased risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes, and some types of cancer. Help your child or teenager to eat healthy, nutritious meals and snacks and to engage in physical activity on most days of the week.



For more information on nutrition counseling, call Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas at 214-345-7413 or visit us at <http://texashealth.org/DallasNutrition>.



## Healthy Habits Last a Lifetime