



# Sports Injuries in Youth: A Guide for Parents

## Points To Remember About Sports Injuries in Youth

- Common sports injuries are: sprains and strains; growth plate injuries; and repetitive motion injuries.
- Sports injuries are first treated with R-I-C-E: Rest, Ice, Compression (pressure on the injury), Elevation (raise the injured area above the heart).
- Your child can prevent sports injuries by following safe exercise habits.
- Playing it safe in heat is also important.

## What are sports injuries in youth?

Although sports injuries can range from scrapes and bruises to serious brain and spinal cord injuries, most fall somewhere between the two extremes. Here are some of the more common types of injuries:

- Muscle [sprains and strains](#).
- Injuries of a growth plate, area of tissue at the end of the long bones in growing children and teens.
- Injuries from overuse of muscles and tendons.

Learn more about [sports injuries](#).

## How are sports injuries in youth treated?

Treatment for sports-related injuries will depend on the type of injury your child has. But if your child has a sprain or strain or a bone injury, the best immediate treatment is easy to remember: RICE (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation):

- **Rest:** Decrease your regular activities and rest the injured area.
- **Ice:** Put an ice pack on the injury for 20 minutes, four to eight times per day. You can use a:
  - Cold pack.

- Ice bag.
- Plastic bag filled with crushed ice wrapped in a towel.
- **Compression:** Put even pressure or compression on the painful area to help reduce the swelling.
- **Elevation:** Put the injured area on a pillow at a level above the heart.

Get professional treatment if any injury is serious. Serious injury means your child has a broken bone, dislocated joint, swelling that doesn't go away, or pain that doesn't go away or that is severe.

## Living with **sports injuries in youth**

### After the Injury Heals: Keep Kids Exercising

It's important that kids continue some type of regular exercise after the injury heals. Exercise may reduce their chances of obesity, which has become more common in children. It may also reduce the risk of diabetes, a disease that can be associated with a lack of exercise and poor eating habits. Exercise also helps build social skills and provides a general sense of well-being. Sports participation is an important part of learning how to build team skills.

Can I prevent them?

## Can I prevent sports injuries in youth?

### General Sports Safety

- Enroll your child in organized sports through schools, community clubs, and recreation areas that are properly maintained.
- Get a preseason exam with a health care provider.
- Make sure your child has – and uses – proper gear for a particular sport.
- Make sure your child follows the rules of the sport.
- Make warm-ups and cool-downs part of your child's routine before and after sports.
- Make sure your child has access to water or a sports drink while playing.
- Make sure your child has sun protection.
- Learn and follow safety rules and suggestions for your child's particular sport.

Adapted from *Play It Safe, a Guide to Safety for Young Athletes*, with permission of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

## Play it Safe in the Heat

- Schedule regular water breaks during practice and games.
- Have your child wear light-colored, “breathable” clothing.
- Make player substitutions more frequently in the heat.
- Use misting sprays on the body to keep cool.
- Know the signs of heat-related problems, including confusion; dilated pupils, dizziness, fainting; headache, heavy perspiration; nausea, pale and moist or hot, dry skin, weak pulse, and weakness. If your child experiences any combination of these symptoms or doesn’t seem quite right, seek medical attention immediately.

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For more info

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