



Just the Facts...

Youth Sports Injuries

Sports and recreational activities are great ways for children to learn valuable life lessons, make new friends, and remain physically active and fit. However, participating in sports and recreational activities also increases a child's risk for injury. Because children are less coordinated and have slower reaction times than adults, the potential for and severity of injury actually increases as children grow older and bigger.

According to the National [SAFE KIDS](#) campaign sponsored by the Children's National Medical Center and Johnson & Johnson, more than 3 million children experience sports and recreation-related injuries each year in the U.S. One out of every five children participating in sports is injured, with one-fourth of these injuries considered serious. Approximately 715,000 sports, recreation, and exercise (SRE) injuries occur each year in school settings alone. Forty percent of all SRE-related emergency visits are experienced by children who are younger than 15. Approximately 21 percent of all traumatic brain injuries in children are the result of sports or recreational activities.



It is estimated by the CDC that half of the sports injuries that occur in children are preventable. While effective interventions like helmets, break-away bases, and impact reducing playground surfacing are available, they frequently are not used. Some simple guidelines to help prevent sports and recreation-related injuries in children are as follows:

- (1) Make sure children wear equipment that is carefully fitted and appropriate for the specific sport. Ask your child's coach about appropriate helmets, mouth guards, and padding. Also, make sure that all safety equipment is used and maintained properly.
- (2) Check playing fields for holes, ruts, rocks, and debris. Carefully inspect the playground where your child plays. Check out this website for more guidance: <http://www.uni.edu/playground/tips/general/inspect.html>
- (3) Prepare children with warm-ups and training sessions before participating in any sport.
- (4) Make sure qualified adults supervise all sports or activities. The team coach should have training in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation. All rules and requirements for safety equipment should be enforced at all times, including during practices. Also, the coach should have a way to reach a parent or responsible adult quickly if needed. Ideally, the coach should hold a meeting for parents early in the season to discuss emergency plans for injuries.

In 1993, the [National Youth Sports Safety Foundation](#) (NYSSF) proclaimed April as National Youth Sports Safety Month to promote safety in sports participation. More than 62 national medical and sports organizations support this monthly recognition. The NYSSF increases public awareness by establishing and promoting the highest standards of prevention, education, and outreach initiatives in youth sports safety.

Participation in sports and recreation activities can be a positive, life enhancing experience for children. However, participating in sports and recreation activities can also result in serious injuries that can be life changing. Fortunately, most injuries can be prevented. Ultimately, it is every parent's responsibility to remain actively involved in their child's sports and recreation activities and know the simple guidelines to follow to prevent injury.