

Sports Safety Tip Sheet for Parents and Youth Coaches



As a youth coach or parent, learn more than just the rules and skills required to win — learn how to keep young athletes injury free so they can stay in the game.

FIRST THINGS FIRST: Every child should receive a pre-participation physical evaluation (PPE) every year. These exams can detect any underlying conditions the young athlete may have and therefore prevent a potential medical emergency.



Action: Parents, talk to your child's doctor and ask them to perform a full PPE. A copy of the exam can be obtained by going to www.safekids.org/sports.

BEFORE PRACTICE, PLAY OR COMPETITION:

Warming up and stretching before play is recommended. This can help prevent sports-related injuries (such as muscle tears or sprains) by stretching and releasing any muscle tension.

Action: Make sure there is time set aside before every practice and game to warm up. This could mean a light run, jogging in place or anything that brings the athletes' heart rate up gradually. Instruct how to stretch muscles and hold for 10-15 seconds.

HYDRATION: Hydrating well before, during and after practices and games is a must.



Action: Make sure the child drinks fluids (water or sports drink) 30 minutes before the activity begins and every 15-20 minutes during activity. Establish mandatory fluid breaks during practice and games—don't wait for the child to tell you he/she is thirsty.

GEAR: Wearing the appropriate and properly fitted sports gear during practice and games can help avoid minor and serious injuries.



Action: Make sure athletes have the right equipment—this may include helmets, shin guards, mouth guards, ankle braces, shoes with rubber cleats, and sunscreen.

QUALIFIED COACHING: Become properly trained and learn sport-specific techniques to prevent sports-related injuries or heat-related illness.



Action: Establish safety guidelines that athletes, parents and coaches will follow such as hydration breaks, learning ways to prevent, recognize and/or respond to concussions and overuse injuries. Also, become trained and certified in first aid and emergency response.

SUPPORTIVE PARENTING: Learn ways to help your child stay injury free and optimally healthy while playing sports.



Action: Make sure the child receives a PPE by his or her doctor, encourage hydration before and after the game, and learn about the signs and symptoms of a concussion or an overuse injury. Becoming certified in first aid and CPR is another worthwhile action step.

ATTEND A SPORTS SAFETY CLINIC: These clinics, such as Safe Kids Sports Safety Clinics, provide coaches and parents with ways to keep young athletes healthy and injury free.

Action: Go to www.safekids.org/sports to learn more about youth sports safety tips and to find a sports safety clinic or Safe Kids coalition in your area.

