



## Sports Safety: Tips For Injury Prevention

Sports activities are an enjoyable and effective means of exercise. However, they're only beneficial if you're healthy enough to play.

Don't get sidelined by a sports-related injury. Follow some basic injury prevention tips:

- **Adequately train:** Make sure you're in proper physical condition for your sport. Don't expect the sport itself to get you in shape.
- **Play by the rules:** Know and abide by the rules of your sport. Rules are designed to keep play safe and organized.
- **Wear protective equipment:** Don't play without appropriate protective gear, such as a helmet, eye protection, mouth guard, wrist/knee/elbow guards, pads, footwear, etc. Make sure equipment meets national standards, is in good condition and is properly fitted.
- **Warm up, stretch and cool down:** Warm up with a low intensity cardiovascular activity to get body tissues warm and flexible. Stretch to help minimize the chance of muscle strain or other soft tissue injury. Cool down to loosen the body's muscles that have tightened during exercise. Make warm ups, stretches and cool downs part of your sports routine.
- **Stay hydrated:** Schedule regular fluid breaks during practice and games. Proper hydration is a continuous process. Be sure to drink enough fluids before and after exercise.
- **Don't play if tired or in pain:** Pay attention to your body's warning signs. If tired, rest to avoid injury from fatigue or poor judgment. If you're in pain, stop playing and seek medical treatment. If injured, take enough time off - you run a greater risk of re-injury if you come back too soon.

Children should adhere to the basic injury prevention tips listed, however there are a few additional issues that parents or guardians must address:

- **Before enrolling in a sport,** make sure your child receives a pre-participation physical.
- **Meet the coach.** Make sure he or she has appropriate credentials for supervising the sport, providing proper direction in conditioning and injury prevention, and administering sports first aid and CPR. Understand his or her emergency plan in case of an accident.
- **Be realistic about your child's abilities.** Match and group him or her according to skill level, weight and physical maturity.
- **Do not put winning before safety and good sportsmanship.** In an effort to strive toward unrealistic expectations, young athletes may ignore warning signs of injury and continue to play with pain. Set realistic goals for your child and emphasize improved performance.

Some helpful resources:

National Safety Council Fact Sheet Library, <http://www.nsc.org/library/facts.htm>

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, <http://www.aaos.org>

National SAFE KIDS Campaign, <http://www.safekids.org>

National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA), <http://www.nata.org>

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), <http://www.niams.nih.gov>

National Youth Sports Safety Foundation, Inc. (NYSSF), <http://www.nyssf.org/>

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