

# Softball safety

A PARENT'S GUIDE FOR GETTING KIDS BACK IN THE GAME

Softball is a non-contact sport so the risk of injury is much lower than other sports. However, shoulder, knee and ankle injuries are common. This reference guide provides information on softball injuries that may require treatment.

## SHOULDER INJURIES

Pitching and throwing can lead to overuse injuries in the arms, elbows and shoulders. While throwing, overuse injuries tend to occur when tissue such as muscles and tendons is damaged by repetitive motion activities. Without adequate time for recovery, the tissue cannot adapt to the demands placed on it and further damage is likely.

The damage caused by repetitive stress leads to tissue inflammation that causes pain. Symptoms of overuse injuries, also considered chronic sports injuries include:

- Pain when performing the activity or sport.
- Intermittent swelling.
- Decreasing performance.
- Dull pain even at rest.

If the symptoms persist, take your child to see her pediatrician or a pediatric sports medicine physician. In each consecutive season, repetitive maneuvers by certain body parts can lead to fatigue and long-term damage.

## ANKLE INJURIES

The most common injury in sports is a lateral ankle sprain. In softball, this injury is caused by rolling the ankle over the outside of the foot. This often occurs when the foot rolls over the edge of a base or when stepping on another player's foot. A lateral ankle sprain causes damage to the ligaments just below the bone on the outside of the ankle. In some cases a "pop" can be felt or heard by the athlete.

Treatment recommendations vary with the severity of the injury:

- Mild sprains require rest but not necessarily medical treatment (follow the PRICE treatment plan, printed on back).
- Injuries with persistent swelling, pain or any deformity should be seen by a physician.



## HEAD INJURIES

A **concussion** is a brain injury usually caused by a sudden jolt or a blow to the head or neck and disrupts normal brain function. This can occur in softball from a pitch that hits the batter's head or a collision at home plate. An athlete does not need to be knocked out, or have memory loss, to have suffered a concussion. In fact, most athletes who suffer a sports-related concussion DO NOT lose consciousness.

Signs of a concussion:

- Dark urine.
- Dry lips and mouth.
- Decrease in reaction time.
- Disorientation.

Athletes with any of these signs should rest and drink water or sports drinks. If the athlete doesn't improve, feels dizzy or faint, or has not had much urine output, she should be seen by a doctor. Seek emergency treatment if the athlete is disoriented, unable to drink or has pale skin.

## DEHYDRATION

Softball players are at risk of dehydration if they don't get enough fluid to replace what is lost through the skin as sweat and through the lungs while breathing. It is important to drink plenty of fluids before, during, and after a workout or game. An athlete's performance can be impacted by even mild dehydration.

Athletes should take a water bottle to school and drink between classes and during breaks so that they are well-hydrated before their workout. In addition:

- Water should be readily available when working out.
- Athletes should drink often – ideally every 15 to 30 minutes.
- Sports drinks are recommended for activities lasting longer than one hour to replace sugar and salt as well as water.

Early signs of dehydration can be non-specific and include:

- Fatigue.
- Irritability.
- Headache.
- Thirst.
- Decreased athletic performance.
- Nausea.
- Apathy.

Signs of advanced dehydration include:

- Dark urine.
- Disorientation.
- Dry lips and mouth.
- Decrease in reaction time.

Athletes with any of these signs should rest and drink water or sports drinks. If the athlete doesn't improve, feels dizzy or faint, or has not had much urine output, he should be seen by a doctor. Seek emergency treatment if the athlete is disoriented, unable to drink or has pale skin.

**T**he Sports Medicine Center at Children's offers the only comprehensive, integrated program in North Texas specifically designed for young and growing athletes. The center goes beyond treatment and rehabilitation of traumatic injuries that occur on the playing field to problems associated with sports participation, including cardiac disorders, asthma and nutrition.

**The Children's Sports Medicine Center** at the Legacy campus in Plano features a 5,000-square-foot facility complete with diagnostic imaging capabilities, a dedicated sports therapy gym, video motion analysis, isokinetic muscle testing and state-of-the-art rehabilitation equipment – all geared to provide your child with the best medical evaluation by the experts treating young and growing athletes.

### Sports Medicine Center

Children's Medical Center at Legacy  
Ambulatory Care Pavilion  
7601 Preston Road  
Plano, Texas 75024  
469-303-3000



For more information visit

[www.childrens.com--/sports-medicine](http://www.childrens.com--/sports-medicine)

### BUMPS, BRUISES, TWISTS & MUSCLE STRAINS

These can affect all areas of the body. Recommended treatment is the PRICE formula:

**P**rotect the area with a sling or crutches, if necessary.

**R**est the injured area.

**I**ce the injury for 20 minutes at a time. Do not apply the ice directly to the skin.

**C**ompress the injured area with a wrap. Do not pull tightly, as this can cut off circulation.

**E**levate the injured area above the heart, if possible.

Athletes should see a pediatrician or pediatric sports medicine physician if any of these symptoms are present:

- Deformity.
- Limping that lasts more than 48 hours.
- Soft tissue swelling that gets worse the next day despite ice and over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medication such as Motrin®.
- Effusion – mobile soft tissue swelling on both sides of a joint, often easily seen at the knee or ankle.
- Pain that returns quickly with activity at the next session or is not gone after two weeks of forced rest.

### SPORTS SAFETY

Children ages 5 to 14 make up almost 40 percent of all sports injuries treated in hospital emergency rooms. Injuries in children are best handled by pediatric specialists trained in treating skeletally immature patients.

#### How to Protect Your Child

Taking the following steps can reduce your child's risk of getting hurt. As a parent, you should:

- Schedule your child for an annual physical before playing sports.
- Monitor play and practice and encourage players to abide by the rules.
- Have a first aid kit handy and an emergency action plan in place. Appropriate shelter should also be close by in case of a storm with lightning.
- Keep sports fun! Remember to be positive and don't push kids to perform beyond their abilities.

#### Make sure your young athlete:

- Wears appropriate properly-fitting safety gear, free of heavy wear and tear.
- Stays properly hydrated. Kids don't sweat as much as adults and need to drink plenty of fluids before, during and after activity.
- Does warm-up and cool-down exercises before and after practices and games.
- Gets proper rest and avoids overdoing it. Baseball, basketball, running, gymnastics and swimming are sports that cause the most overuse injuries in kids.

Kohl's Sports Health and  
Wellness Outreach Program

**KOHL'S**  
expect great things®