

Ambler Pediatrics

602 S. Bethlehem Pike
Ambler, PA 19002-5886

Telephone: (215) 643-7771
Telefax: (215) 643-9463

E-mail: aped@amblerpeds.com
Web Site: www.amblerpeds.com

Sports Injury Prevention Tips

More American children are competing in sports than ever before. Sports help children and adolescents keep their bodies fit and feel good about themselves. However, there are some important injury prevention tips that parents should be aware of to promote a safe, optimal sports experience for their child.

Injury Risks

All sports have a risk of injury. In general, the more contact in a sport, the greater the risk of injury.

Most injuries occur to ligaments, tendons and muscles. Only about 5 percent of sports injuries involve broken bones. However, the areas where bones grow in children are at more risk of injury during the rapid growth phase of puberty.

Most frequent sports injuries are sprains (injuries to ligaments) and strains (injuries to muscles), caused when too much stress is placed on tendons, joints, bones and muscle. As always, contact your pediatrician if you have additional questions or concerns.

To reduce injury:

- **Wear the right gear.** Players should wear appropriate protective equipment such as pads (neck, shoulder, elbow, chest, knee, shin), helmets, mouthpieces, face guards, protective cups, and/or eyewear.
- **Increase flexibility.** Stretching exercises before and after games can increase flexibility.
- **Strengthen muscles.** Conditioning exercises during practice and before games strengthens muscles used in play.
- **Use the proper technique.** This should be reinforced during the playing season.
- **Take breaks.** Rest periods during practice and games can reduce injuries.
- **Play safe.** Strict rules against headfirst sliding (baseball and softball), spearing (football), and body checking (ice hockey) should be enforced.
- **Stop the activity** if there is pain.
- **Avoid heat injury** by drinking plenty of fluids before, during and after exercise or play; decrease or stop practices or competitions during high heat/humidity periods; wear light clothing.

Sports-Related Emotional Stress

The pressure to win can cause significant emotional stress for a child. Sadly, many coaches and parents consider winning the most important aspect of sports. Young athletes should be judged on effort, sportsmanship and hard work. They should be rewarded for trying hard and for improving their skills rather than punished or criticized for losing a game or competition.