

**fallfreezone**



**SPORTS**

## **Team Sports Safety for Children Ages Six to 19 Years**

The majority of sports injuries are sprains and strains, caused when stress is placed on tendons, joints, bones, and muscle. About five percent of sports injuries involve broken bones.

The good news is that **you**, as a parent or caregiver, can play a major role in preventing team sports injuries.

### **When is my child old enough to play team sports?**

- Children are generally ready to participate in organized sports by 6 years of age. Most children are ready to play contact sports by 8 years of age.
- Consider your child's age, weight, and size as well as his or her emotional development. Do not force your child to play a sport if he or she is not physically or emotionally ready to handle competition.

### **What are some benefits of participating in team sports?**

- Team sports, like football, ice hockey, soccer, baseball, and softball are good sources of physical activity and teach children sportsmanship and discipline.
- Organized sports are excellent because coaches are available to supervise the children, and make sure rules are followed so everyone plays safely.

### **How should my child prepare for participating in team sports?**

- Getting a yearly physical exam before the start of the season will ensure your child can safely engage in sports and recreational activities.
- All players should warm up before and cool down after playing. Conditioning and stretching exercises before games and during practices help to strengthen muscles.

- Make sure your child stays hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids before, during and after exercise or play.

**When playing baseball or softball, what kind of safety equipment should my child use?**

- In baseball and softball, the use of safety balls, breakaway bases, protective helmets, and faceguards can help reduce the risk injuries.
- Reduced-impact balls, which are softer than traditional baseballs, are designed to protect players who are still developing fielding skills. These balls come in a variety of materials and impact levels (the higher the level, the harder the ball).
- The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons recommends using breakaway bases at all levels of baseball and softball to reduce the risk of injury.
- Wearing a hard-shell helmet while batting and running bases can reduce the risk of sustaining a head injury if hit by a ball.
- Proper instruction in sliding techniques should be taught and your child should practice before using any bags, including breakaway bases. Strict rules against headfirst sliding should be enforced.

**When playing football, what kinds of equipment should my child use?**

According to the *Pop Warner Football, Official Rule Book*, youth football players should wear the following protective gear:

- Helmet
- Pads (shoulder, hip, tail, and knee)
- Pants (one piece or shell)
- Thigh guards
- Jersey
- Mouthguard (a "keeper strap" is required to safely secure the mouthguard to the face mask)
- Athletic supporter
- Shoes (Depending on the league, players can wear sneakers or rubber cleat shoes.)
- Eyeglasses worn by football players should be made of shatter-proof glass (safety glass), or, as an alternative, these athletes should wear contact lenses.

**When playing ice hockey, what kinds of equipment should my child use?**

All hockey players should wear the following protective equipment:

- Helmet/face mask with strap properly fastened
- Body padding (shoulder, shin, elbow, hip, and tendon)

- Padded hockey pants
- Gloves
- Jersey
- Mouthguard
- Athletic supporter
- Eyeglasses worn by hockey players should be made of shatter-proof glass (safety glass), or players should wear contact lenses.

**What are some important safety rules my child should follow when playing ice hockey and football?**

Strict rules against body checking (using the body to knock an opponent against the boards or to the ice) and spearing (the use of a helmet to butt or ram an opponent) should be enforced.

**What are some other team sports safety tips?**

The American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness recommends that children and adolescents limit a particular sports activity to a maximum of five days per week with at least one day off from any organized physical activity.

In order to further reduce their risk of injury, athletes should have at least two to three months off per year from their particular sport, to allow injuries to heal and to work on strengthening and conditioning activities.

**Where can I find more information about team sports safety?**

- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons ([www.aaos.org](http://www.aaos.org))
- American Academy of Pediatrics ([www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org))
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - "Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports" Tool Kit ([www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports](http://www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports))
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([www.bam.gov](http://www.bam.gov))
- Kid's Health - Sports Injuries ([www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org))
- National Federation of State High School Associations ([www.nfhs.org/sports.aspx](http://www.nfhs.org/sports.aspx))
- National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases ([www.niams.nih.gov](http://www.niams.nih.gov))
- Pop Warner Football Chart: Ages and Weights for Tackle Football Programs ([www.popwarner.com/football/footballstructure.asp](http://www.popwarner.com/football/footballstructure.asp))

NYS Data Source: NYS DOH, Bureau of Injury Prevention  
[http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/injury\\_prevention/](http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/injury_prevention/)  
SPARCS GEN07MTH 2009