

# A Parents Guide for Childhood Sports Injuries and Prevention

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If you are a parent and have children who play sports, you know that there are risks that go along with most sports activities. You hope that it's not your child that gets hurt at practice or in the game. Some injuries may be inevitable, but there are ways to help protect and possibly prevent your child from a sports related injury.

## **Preventing Injuries:**

- Enroll your child in organized sports through your community, schools, and recreational areas where there may be a certified ATC (Athletic Trainer). An ATC is trained in the prevention, recognition, and immediate care of athletic injuries.
- Have the proper protective gear for the particular sport.
- Make warm-ups and cool-downs part of your child's routine before and after participating in sports. Warm-up exercises, such as stretching, make the body's tissues warmer and more flexible and can help minimize the chance of muscle sprains or strains. Cooling down loosens the body's muscles that have tightened during exercise.
- Treating Injuries with "RICE" If your child received a sprain, strain, or a bone injury, the best immediate treatment is what's known as "RICE" (rest, ice, compression, and elevation.)
  - **Rest-** Reduce or stop using the injured area for about 48 hours.
  - **Ice-** Put an ice pack on the injured area for 15-20 minutes, 4-8 times a day. The use of ice is usually best within the first 48 hours following an injury.
  - **Compression-** Compression of the injured area can help reduce swelling. This can be done by using elastic wraps, special compression boots, air casts, or splints.
  - **Elevation-** Elevating the injured area above the level of the heart can also help reduce swelling.

## **Types of Injuries:**

- **Sprains vs. Strains:** A sprain is an injury to a ligament involving over stretching or tearing of the ligament. A ligament is a band of tissue that connects two or more bones to a joint. A strain is an injury to either a muscle or a tendon. A muscle is tissue that contracts and produces movement. A tendon is a tough cord of tissue that connects the muscle to bone.
- **Repetitive Motion Injuries:** Injuries such as a stress fracture (where the ligament pulls off small pieces of bone) or tendonitis (inflammation of a tendon) can occur from overuse or repetitive use of muscles and tendons. Rest of the injured area can help reduce symptoms, but other treatments include RICE, crutches, cast immobilization, or physical therapy.

**The following is a list of common injuries that come with specific sports:**

- **Football:** Bruises, sprains, strains, broken bones, internal injuries, and back injuries. Knees and ankles are most common sites of injury.
- **Basketball:** Sprains, strains, bruises, fractures, scrapes, dislocations, and dental injuries. Most common sites are ankles, knees, and shoulders.
- **Soccer:** Bruises, cuts and scrapes, headaches, and sunburn.
- **Baseball/Softball:** Strains, impact injuries that include fractures from sliding or being hit by the ball, and sunburn
- **Gymnastics:** Sprains and strains. The most common sites are the hips, back, and knees
- **Track & Field:** Strains, sprains and scrapes from falls.

Although it is impossible to completely avoid a sports injury, with a little knowledge on protection and prevention you may help to avoid getting that dreaded phone call that tells you your child has been injured at practice or in the game. If your child does receive an injury make sure to seek medical attention from your physician or physical therapist if needed.