

## Tips for Preventing Baseball and Softball Injuries

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In the United States 33 million people participate in organized baseball and softball. Although these are not considered contact sports, they are associated with a large number of injuries. The majority of injuries in baseball and softball are abrasions, sprains, strains, and fractures. Each year thousands of baseball and softball players under the age of 15 are injured badly enough to seek treatment in a hospital emergency room. Thousands of adults receive minor injuries in these sports as well.

Baseball can lead to injuries caused by overusing a certain body part, such as pitchers who commonly suffer from elbow or shoulder injuries. More catastrophic injuries are rare, but can occur when struck in the head or chest with a ball or bat.

Preventing these injuries begins with making sure you are wearing the proper safety gear in both practices and games. If your child is a pitcher, make sure pitching time is limited. Little League baseball mandates time limits and requires rest periods. If they are a catcher make sure they are wearing the proper equipment such as a face mask, throat guard, long-model chest protector, shin guards and using a catcher's mitt.

Stretching and warming up before each practice or game is important for injury prevention. Jumping jacks, stationary cycling, running or walking in place are good ways to warm up. Do not let children play through pain. If your child is injured, take them to see their doctor, follow all of the doctor's order, and get the doctor's OK before they return to play. Be familiar with RICE (rest, ice, compression, elevation). Try this technique immediately following an injury. It can help prevent long term injuries.

Your child's coach should enforce the rules of the game, encourage safe play, and understand the risks that young players face. Make sure your child is taught the proper way to slide to avoid injury. Never encourage sliding head first in young players. Encourage you local league to use breakaway bases which detach when someone slides into them. These can prevent many injuries. Teach them how to dodge a ball that is pitched directly at them. They need to turn away from the pitch, not towards it or leaning back away from it. Above all of these precautions keep the sport fun and you and your child will be safe. Putting too much focus on winning can make your child push too hard and risk injury.

However in the event of an injury, your child may benefit from Physical Therapy. The physical therapists at *Community Care Physicians Physical Therapy* can assist with recovery from injury and help prevent future injuries with an individualized treatment program.

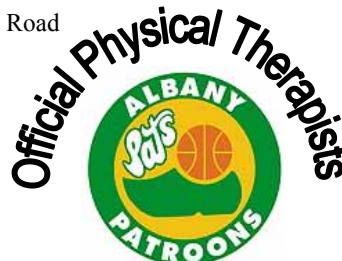
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