

# Baseball safety

## A parent's guide for keeping kids in the game.



**Recent data shows 250,000 youth are injured each year playing baseball.**

**This reference guide provides information on the most common baseball injuries requiring treatment.**

### Arm injuries

Pitching and throwing can lead to overuse injuries in the arms, elbows, and shoulders. Tissue such as bone, cartilage, or tendon can become damaged by repetitive motion activities. Without adequate time for recovery, the tissue cannot adapt to the demands placed on it.

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
- Dull pain even at rest
- Intermittent swelling
- Inability to straighten the elbow
- Decreasing performance

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

### Elbow injuries

In young players, bones have not finished growing. Repetitive motion can cause muscles and tendons to pull on the bones at these growth sites where they are most vulnerable. This can cause pain and discomfort, and with continued activity, can cause a fragment to pull away from the bone on the inner side of the elbow. Rest is the primary treatment. Prevention by following pitch count recommendations is most important.

A good reference for the most up-to-date information on pitch counts is available on the Little League website: [www.littleleague.org](http://www.littleleague.org) — under the rules and regulation changes tab.

A secondary symptom of this type of overuse is pain on the outside of the elbow from the compression of the two bones at that point. With continued activity, damage to the bone can leave the soft covering of the bone vulnerable to injury. This may require surgery to remove pieces of the soft covering if it becomes loose.

Elbow pain should not be ignored. Rest is recommended to allow for sufficient recovery. If symptoms persist after two weeks of forced rest, a visit to a pediatric orthopedic surgeon is recommended. Delayed treatment of problems can make a significant impact on future participation in throwing sports.

### Head injuries

A concussion is a brain injury usually caused by a sudden jolt or a blow to the head or neck that disrupts normal brain function.

This can occur in baseball 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.

### You may observe that an athlete with a concussion:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Moves clumsily
- Is confused
- Answers questions slowly
- Forgets plays
- Has behavior or personality changes
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Can't recall events either before or after hit
- Exhibits unsteadiness
- Loses consciousness

### An athlete with a concussion may have:

- Headache
- Concentration or memory problems
- Nausea
- Double or fuzzy vision
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Feelings of being "in a fog"
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Confusion

An athlete with signs of a concussion should be removed from play immediately and not allowed to return until evaluated by a doctor. Do not leave an athlete alone after a concussion.

### Call for immediate medical help if your child displays:

- A headache that gets worse, lasts for a long time, or is severe
- Confusion, extreme sleepiness, or trouble waking up
- Vomiting (more than once)
- Seizures (arms and legs jerk uncontrollably)
- Trouble walking or talking
- Weak or numb arms or legs
- Any other sudden change in thinking or behavior

Most athletes with a concussion will recover completely within a few weeks of the initial injury. Returning to play before completely recovering puts the athlete at risk for a more serious injury, long-term damage, and even death.



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## Ankle injuries

The most common injury in sports is a lateral ankle sprain. In baseball, 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" is felt or heard by the athlete.

Treatment recommendations vary with severity of the injury:

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

## Dehydration

Baseball 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.

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

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

## 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 athletes don't improve, feel dizzy or faint, or have not had much urine output, they should be seen by a doctor. Seek emergency treatment if the athlete is disoriented, unable to drink, or has pale skin.

## Bumps, bruises, twists, and 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.

Athletes should see a pediatrician or pediatric orthopedic specialist 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 the knee or ankle.
- Pain that returns quickly with activity at the next session or is not gone after two weeks of forced rest.

## SSM Health Cardinal Glennon SportsCare

SSM Health Cardinal Glennon SportsCare is the premier pediatric sports medicine provider in St. Louis and St. Charles. We provide exclusive, direct access to comprehensive medical care for young athletes.

Specialists your child has access to include adolescent medicine physicians, cardiologists, emergency medicine physicians, neurologists, nutritionists, orthopedists, pediatric psychologists, physical therapists, pulmonologists, radiologists, and rehabilitation specialists. We also keep kids in the game through educational programs and supports for parents, coaches and athletes that focus on injury prevention, proper technique and overall athletic health.

For more information about SSM Health Cardinal Glennon SportsCare or to find a specialist for your athlete, call or text us **24/7 at 314-577-5640**.

Expert care for young athletes by SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital providers, **24 hours a day in the ER at:** SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital, DePaul Hospital, St. Clare Hospital, St. Joseph Hospital-St. Charles, St. Joseph Hospital-Lake St. Louis, Anderson Hospital, and HSHS St. Elizabeth Hospital.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, SSM Health ministries implemented enhanced safety measures, which are evaluated periodically based on COVID-19 transmission numbers. To ensure your protection and that of others, we continue to require face masks upon entry along with ministry-specific screening processes.