

Pitching count safety

A parent's guide to signs, symptoms, treatment, and prevention.



The American Sports Medicine Institute recommends these regulations for age and pitch count:

Age	Max pitches per game	Max games per week
8-10	52	2
11-12	68	2
13-14	76	2
15-16	91	2

For developing pitchers, small pitch totals with more frequency (e.g. two innings, three times per week) are easier on the arm and better for skill development than large pitch totals in a single outing (e.g. six innings, one time per week). It is most important for developing pitchers to have at least one day of rest after each game.

Relative body size is another factor in arm care. For example, a thin 12-year-old with an above-average arm and below-average functional strength is in jeopardy to hurt their arm with large pitch totals in a single game. Conversely, a six-foot-tall, 180-pound 12-year-old should be able to better handle the high-end pitch total limit for a youth pitcher without significant risk of injury.

Once a pitcher of any age gets into muscle failure competition, every pitch is exponentially more stressful on the arm.

The following is a single formula for youth pitchers: Every pitch past muscle failure equals three pitches before muscle failure. For example, a 12-year-old who hits muscle failure with 60 pitches in four innings but throws one more inning of 15 pitches actually stressed their arm the equivalent of 105 pitches.

With skill work, the pitcher should be completely warmed-up and loosened-up before going to the mound. Then, their pitch totals should be kept at 30 to 45.

Prevention strategies

Conditioning, flexibility, strength, and functional movement training may reduce the risk of non-contact injuries.

Proper mechanics

Proper throwing and mechanics reduce stress on joints and muscles, reducing the risk of injury.

Warm-up and cool-down

Baseball warm-up involves both the lower and upper body. Start at a slower, more relaxed pace and gradually increase intensity. When perspiration begins, the muscles are ready for a workout.

Stretching

Stretch only after having warmed up; a cold muscle is more likely to tear when stretched. Stretching after a workout increases flexibility and reduces stress on joints. Perform stretches slowly, holding each position for at least five seconds.

Nutrition

Proper diet and hydration before and during your workout will help you achieve peak performance.

Too many young pitchers experiment with breaking balls or split-finger fast balls before they have developed proper mechanics and useable strength.

Pitching count safety (cont.)



Bumps, bruises, twists, and muscle strains

These can affect all areas of the body. Recommended treatment is the **PRICE** formula:

Protect the area with a sling or crutches, if necessary.

Rest the injured area.

Ice the injury for 20 minutes at a time. Do not apply the ice directly to the skin.

Compress the injured area with a wrap. Do not pull tightly, as this can cut off circulation.

Elevate the injured area above the heart.



Hydration to facilitate recovery time

Some of the first signs of dehydration are diminished concentration and inability to focus. Simply hydrating early and often will actually facilitate a pitcher's mental acuity in preparation and competition. Cramping muscles will pull extra fluids and electrolytes from the system and can significantly delay the total-body recovery process.

Sleep cycles to facilitate recovery time

All human beings need sleep to recover from their daily activities. Athletes, especially teenage athletes, are in need of even more sleep. Pitchers should plan to sleep at night for six hours, seven-and-a-half hours, or nine hours, and whenever possible, mix in a daily 20- to 30-minute "power nap."

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.