



# Sports Overuse Injury Tip Sheet

Everything you need to know to keep your kids safe from overuse injuries.

We know kids love to play their favorite sports as much as possible. But playing the same sport multiple times a week, for long hours, without any break in between play or seasons can cause long term damage. These are called overuse injuries and they can be prevented with a few simple tips.



*Children who participate in two or more sports where similar muscles are used, like swimming and baseball, are at higher risk of overuse injuries than those who participate in sports with different muscle emphasis, like track and golf.*

## Know What to Look For

- Overuse injuries can be very subtle, making their detection difficult. Examples include: Achilles tendinitis, runner's knee, shin splints or pitching elbow.

## Benefits of a Pre-Season Program

- When starting a new sport, consider having kids participate in a pre-season conditioning program or training to gradually build strength and endurance.
- Increase the intensity, distance or duration of activity by about 10 percent each week. This allows the body to rest, rebuild, recover and avoid injury.

## Don't Forget to Warm Up and Stretch

- Set aside time before every practice and game for athletes to warm up properly.
- Athletes should start with about 10 minutes of jogging or any light activity, and then stretch all major muscle groups, holding for 20 to 30 seconds. This increases circulation to cold muscles, improves flexibility and makes muscles less prone to strain or tear.
- Stretching before practice and games can release muscle tension and help prevent sports-related injuries.



## Make Rest a Priority

- Athletes should take at least one or two days off each week from any particular sport.
- Support athletes to take time off from one particular sport to prevent overuse injuries. It is an opportunity to develop skills learned in another sport and strengthen different muscle groups.

## Mix it Up

- Encourage athletes to play a variety of sports to help balance muscle development, prevent mental fatigue, otherwise known as “burnout,” and decrease the risk of overuse injuries.
- During the off-season, cross-train with other sports and activities to stay in shape or consider a varied workout schedule with hard and easy routines.
- Playing different sports throughout the year will make kids well-rounded athletes.



## Communicate and Respond Quickly to Injuries

- Encourage athletes to tell coaches, parents or another adult about any pain, injury or illness they may have during or after practices or games.
- Consult a doctor if the pain does not go away after a day or two. Use ice and anti-inflammatory medications to help reduce pain and swelling.
- An athlete should return to play only after evaluated and cleared by a medical professional.
- Remember, quick and proper treatment can mean a shorter recovery time and faster return to play.



To learn more about sports-specific overuse injuries, visit the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine go to [www.STOPSportsinjuries.org](http://www.STOPSportsinjuries.org)

To learn more about knee injury prevention through Santa Monica Orthopaedic Group's PEP Program (Prevent Injury and Enhance Performance), go to [www.smogknee.com/pepprogram.html](http://www.smogknee.com/pepprogram.html)

To learn more about sports safety, go to [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)