

PARENT CHECKLIST FOR YOUTH SPORTS SAFETY

Parents of youth athletes play a critical role in ensuring the health and safety of their child. The risk of injury is inherent in sports, so parents must be proactive and well informed to help keep their athlete safe.

Below is a checklist to help reduce sports related injuries and illnesses and keep your child active and in the game.

1. DETERMINE WHO WILL PROVIDE MEDICAL CARE DURING A PRACTICE OR GAME.

Approximately 1.4 million sports related injuries occur each year and more than 60% of injuries happen during practice. Determine who will provide medical care for your child in case of an injury or illness. A dedicated health care professional, ideally an athletic trainer, should be present to reduce risk and provide emergency care. Having an unbiased expert make medical decisions ensures that your child's safety is the number one priority.

If your school or club doesn't provide an athletic trainer or other dedicated medical professional during athletic activities, talk to the school or club administration about your concerns.

2. DETERMINE THE COACH'S TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE.

Coaches should have proper training and education on key health and safety issues to ensure that proper medical care is understood by all. Ask about the coaches: **Education, Training, Background Checks, Certification (such as first aid, CPR, AED, licensure/regulation as required by each state).**

3. ENSURE THE TEAM IS PREPARED FOR AN EMERGENCY.

WHAT HAPPENS IF AN EMERGENCY OCCURS?

Ask your school or club if they have and rehearse venue specific emergency action plans. These plans help to keep athletes, spectators and

staff safe in case of an emergency by providing individual assignments and emergency supplies/equipment needed for various scenarios. If an athletic trainer is not employed by the school or sport league, other qualified individuals, such as a coach or athletic director, need to be present to coordinate care and carry out the emergency action plan. Knowing that a school has prepared for an emergency will give you and your child peace of mind and increase your child's chance of survival and speedy recovery should a medical emergency occur.

EMERGENCY READY

PLAN: Does your school or club have a plan in place for emergencies at every venue where athletes will train, practice and play?

PREPARE: Is necessary safety equipment (such as an AED) available and in working order?

PRACTICE: Does your school rehearse emergency action plans on a regular basis?

4. CONFIRM THAT THERE IS APPROPRIATE SAFETY EQUIPMENT.

IS THE EQUIPMENT ADEQUATE AND SAFE?

From the clothes and equipment your child wears, to the fields, surfaces and equipment your child plays on, you need to make sure the equipment is safe for play.

Try to make sure your athlete has supportive shoes and the right size clothing, as equipment that is too small or too big can predispose your child to injury.

Talk to the athletic trainer, coach or athletic director about the safety of the equipment used in

athletic activities. This includes making sure that helmets are fit properly, that fields and gyms are checked regularly and that emergency equipment is available and in working order.

- **Correct fit for helmet, pads and other protective gear.**
- **Field and gym checked prior to play for any foreign objects or wear and tear that pose a potential risk.**
- **Locker rooms and gym mats sanitized regularly to help prevent the sharing of bacterial, viral and fungal skin infections.**
- **AEDs available within 3 to 5 minutes and in working order.**

5. MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD IS READY FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.

IS YOUR CHILD READY TO PLAY?

Before your child begins any type of athletic activity or returns to play following an injury or illness, you need to determine that he or she is ready for play.

Schedule a pre-participation physical exam with your child's primary care provider to determine his or her readiness to play and discover any condition that may limit participation. A young athlete's underlying medical condition, such as asthma, can be exacerbated with vigorous, sustained physical activity. Being aware of these conditions in advance helps to keep your athlete safe.

Also be sure to share your child's medical history, emergency contact information and appropriate consent to treat authorizations with your school. Work together with coaches and athletic trainers to determine your child's mental and physical readiness. A young athlete should not be pushed into something he or she does not want to do. If an athlete has been injured and is returning to sport, it's critical for him or her to have the right mind set and confidence to return to play and avoid repeat injury.

6. MAKE IT FUN.

As a parent, you have a lot of influence over your child. The number one reason kids drop out of sports is because it is no longer fun. Here are a few

things you can do as a parent to help keep your child physically active in sports and having fun.

- **Be a good sport: model good sportsmanship and self-control. Cheer for everyone on the team and show respect to the coaches, officials and opposing team.**
- **Keep it positive: No matter the outcome of the game, encourage your child. Emphasize having fun more than winning.**
- **Keep the game in perspective: Don't define success and failure by winning and losing. Your child can learn life-long lessons, like determination and teamwork, through sports participation.**
- **Explore different types of sports: talk to your kids about what sports they're interested in. Playing multiple sports and taking rests between seasons may help prevent burnout and keep your child excited about physical activity.**

7. KNOW THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS.

One of the most important things you can do as a parent of a youth athlete is know the signs and symptoms of injuries and illnesses common in sports. Knowing the signs and symptoms will help ensure timely diagnosis and treatment. Sports-related injuries and illnesses that you should know the signs and symptoms of include:

CONCUSSION: Every three minutes a youth athlete is seen for a concussion. Concussions can happen in any sport or recreational activity, but have an increased risk in sports where contact with another athlete is common.

SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST: Cardiac arrest can affect anyone at any age or any time and is the leading cause of death in exercising youth athletes. Prompt recognition and proper response is vital for survival.

HEAT ILLNESS AND DEHYDRATION: Heat illness and dehydration can affect all youth athletes. In fact, two-thirds of athletes show up to practice significantly dehydrated. The best way to protect athletes is to know and address the factors that lead to heat illness.

OVERUSE INJURIES: Overuse injuries account for nearly half of all youth sport related injuries. Young athletes who play one sport year round are at risk for these types of injuries.

To learn more about the parent's role in sports safety, visit atyourownrisk.org/the-role-of-parents.



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