



Phoenix Children's®

Herbert J. Louis

Center for Orthopedics and Sports Medicine

Sports Participation Best Practices

Most sports injuries can be prevented. Kids should always use protective equipment, but more importantly, use good, old-fashioned common sense.

Safety Tips for Coaches and Parents

- Players should always wear appropriate safety equipment.
- Warm-up and stretching routines should always be done before games and practices.
- Young athletes should always play against kids of a similar age and skill level.
- Coaches and parents should never push children to play beyond their capabilities or force them to play when they're tired or in pain.
- Hold practice and games with adequate days off between for rest and recovery.

Knowing Your Child's Sport Program and Coaches

Only a small percentage of volunteer coaches have training in safety or coaching skills. Before your child signs up for a sports league, there are aspects about the programs you need to know:

- Certification and training: At minimum, coaches should be certified in first aid and CPR.
- Emergency preparedness: A well-equipped first-aid kit, a checklist for what to do in emergencies and a cell phone should be taken to practices and games. Leagues should also adopt policies regarding inclement weather, including canceling practices or moving them indoors when prudent.
- Safety equipment: Coaches should require young athletes to wear appropriate safety gear, such as helmets, face and mouth guards, chest protectors and athletic supporters. All gear and field equipment, such as goal posts and backboards, should meet national safety standards.
- Preparation and conditioning - coaches should lead team members through warm-up routines before games and practices and stretching routines and cool-downs afterward.
- Coaching philosophy: A win-at-all-costs attitude can push children past their capabilities, resulting in injuries. Coaches should stress skill development and fun.
- Field command: Horseplay and aggressive or rowdy behavior can result in injuries. Coaches should stay in control.
- Background checks: Before hiring any coach, league managers should do a background check to make sure the person has no criminal record.