

Stay in the game

Your guide to sports safety



Sports have multiple benefits for children, both physically and emotionally. Children who participate in organized sports are able to develop habits for a healthy lifestyle while also socializing with other kids and making friends. However, with all of the benefits of sports, there also comes the potential for risk and injury. According to Safe Kids Worldwide, 2.6 million children receive medical treatment for sports-related injuries each year. By knowing how to prepare your child before play, and taking care of them during as well as after an athletic activity, we can begin to reduce this statistic.

Preplay

- Before any organized sport, bring your child to your primary care provider to receive a pre-participation physical, which can detect any potential health risks your child may have before they participate in a sport.
- Make sure there is time for child athletes to warm up before all practices and games.
- Teach children the importance of stretching and how to stretch properly. Stretching before physical activity can help prevent sports-related injuries such as muscle tearing or sprains.
- Baseline testing is encouraged for all kids ages 10 and older. Baseline testing provides information about an athlete's normal level of brain function before a brain injury. This information can then be compared with test results after a concussion occurs.

Stay hydrated

- Have your child bring a bottle of water to every practice and game.
- Encourage your child to drink plenty of water before, during and after play. For every 20 minutes of play, a child athlete should drink about 10 gulps (7 to 10 ounces) of water.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of dehydration and other forms of heat illness.

Sports gear

- Having kids wear the appropriate and properly-fitted sports gear during all practices and games can help avoid minor and serious injuries. Equipment may include helmets, pads, shin guards, mouth guards, ankle braces or sunscreen.
- Wearing a helmet is a must to reduce the risk of a serious brain injury or skull fracture. However, no helmet is designed to prevent concussions.

Make rest a priority

- Ensure there is time set aside for periods of rest during activity.
- Encourage children to tell coaches, parents or another adult if they are hurt or not feeling well.
- Make sure kids know how to communicate any pain, injury or illness they may have before, during or after any game or practice.

Concussions

- Concussions are a type of brain injury caused by a blow or jolt to the head.
- In order to prevent a concussion, be sure players follow their coach's rules for safety, the rules of the sport and always practice good sportsmanship.
- Signs and symptoms of a concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days or weeks after the injury.
- Concussion can look different from person to person and from one injury to another. Symptoms can include:
 - Headache
 - Confusion
 - Difficulty remembering or paying attention
 - Balance problems or dizziness
 - Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy
 - Double or blurry vision
 - Sensitivity to light and/or noise
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Slowed reaction time
 - Sleep problems
 - Loss of consciousness
 - Not "feeling right"
- Michigan law requires all coaches, employees, volunteers and other adults involved with a youth athletic activity to complete a concussion awareness online training program. All young athletes, as well as their parents/guardians, must receive education about the signs, symptoms and consequences of concussions and sign a written agreement to acknowledge that this information was received.

If you suspect a concussion

- Don't hide it; immediately seek medical attention. Only a health care professional can tell if a concussion has occurred and when it's okay to return to play.
- Early recognition, evaluation and treatment of a concussion by an expert can prevent serious complications and facilitate long-term healing.
- Give your child time to heal. A repeat concussion while his or her brain is still healing can cause long-term health problems.

Spectrum Health Medical Group's sports concussion clinic offers an integrated approach to concussion evaluation and treatment for people who have received an athletic-related head injury. Visit shmg.org/sports-concussion-clinic for more information.

Contact us

For more information, contact Helen DeVos Children's Hospital Injury Prevention Program at **616.391.SAFE** (7233) or visit helendevoschildrens.org/injuryprevention.

If your child has an injury, visit our Sports Injury Clinic, available this fall on Saturdays from August 30 through November. The Sports Injury Clinic is located at 4100 Lake Drive SE, Suite 300, and will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. Walk-ins welcome. No appointment necessary. For more information, call **616.267.8860** or toll-free **866.533.1673**, or visit shmg.org/sports-injury-clinic

