

Injuries to high school baseball players becoming more serious

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Although the overall rate of high school baseball-related injuries has decreased within the last 10 years, the severity of injuries that occur has increased, according to a new study conducted by researchers at the Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP) of The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital. During the two-year study period, an estimated 132,000 high school baseball-related injuries occurred with an injury rate of more than one per 1,000 athletic exposures.

Potential explanations for the increase in the severity of these injuries are attributed to the increase of intensity during competition and the size and strength of players resulting in them throwing faster, hitting harder and generating more force during player-to-player contact. The fact many high school baseball players now participate in baseball year round also likely contributes to overuse injuries.

"Based on our findings regarding the risk of sustaining an injury when hit by a batted ball, we strongly recommend helmets with face shields or at least mouth guards and eye protection be used by all pitchers, infielders and batters at the high school level," explained the study's lead author Christy Collins, MA, research associate in CIRP of Nationwide Children's Hospital.

According to the study, published in the June issue of *Pediatrics*, being hit by a batted ball is one of the more common mechanisms of baseball-related injuries and one of the most serious. More than half of the injuries that occurred as a result of being hit by a batted ball were to the

head/face and teeth and 40 percent resulted in fractures, lacerations or concussions. When compared to other injuries, injured players struck by a batted ball were more than twice as likely to require surgery. The study also found pitchers are not the only players at risk. Half of the injuries attributed to being hit by a batted ball were sustained during fielding.

"The use of face guards among batters is becoming more accepted in youth baseball," added study co-author Dawn Comstock, PhD, principal investigator in CIRP of Nationwide Children's and faculty member of The Ohio State University College of Medicine. "However, the use of proven protective equipment such as face shields, mouth guards and eye protection is not yet widely accepted by players and coaches at the high school level. Research shows that wearing such protective equipment reduces the risk of sports-related facial and dental injuries."

Source: Nationwide Children's Hospital

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