

Counting pitches can save young players' arms but not always used consistently

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Youth baseball has morphed into a year-round sport, with some athletes playing on multiple teams in the same season. One result: an increasing number of pitchers sidelined with overuse injuries or needing surgery.

Guidelines on how many pitches young athletes should throw have been developed to stem the tide of injuries, but many coaches are not following the recommendations consistently, according to a study to be presented at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) National Conference & Exhibition in San Diego.

"Our results show that youth baseball coaches are familiar with pitch counting but may not be using pitch counts all the time," said Sara Fraley, a fourth-year medical student at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine in Cleveland.

Fraley and Allison Gilmore, MD, a pediatric orthopedic surgeon at Rainbow Babies & Children Hospital in Cleveland, surveyed 61 youth baseball coaches in Cincinnati and northeast Ohio to learn about their attitudes toward pitch counts, how they tracked and limited pitches, knowledge of injury risk factors and athlete demographics.

Results showed all of the coaches were familiar with pitch counts and were limiting pitches in some manner. In addition, 92 percent knew throwing with a fatigued arm put athletes at risk for injury. However, 44 percent admitted that they do not use pitch counts all of the time, and less than one in 10 coaches monitors and sets safe limits on how much

athletes are pitching throughout the season or year, as recommended by the AAP.

Additionally, 41 percent of respondents coach athletes who are at an increased risk for overuse injury because they play on multiple baseball teams in the same season. More than one-third of coaches had at least one athlete benched with an overuse injury.

Coaches listed several reasons for not following pitch-count [recommendations](#), including lack of knowledge, not having enough staff to keep track of pitches and lack of desire to perform the tedious task.

"It is important for [athletes](#), parents, coaches and pediatricians to pay close attention to how much youth [pitchers](#) are throwing and to work together to keep youth baseball a healthy and fun activity," Fraley said.

More information: The study will be presented from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. PDT Friday, Oct. 10 in Ballroom 6 CDEF as part of the Peds21 symposium, "1, 2, 3, Go! Sports in the World of Pediatrics—Playing it Safe and Making it Fun!" in the San Diego Convention Center. It will also be presented at 2:50 p.m. PDT Saturday, Oct. 11 in Indigo Ballroom C at the Hilton San Diego Bayfront.

To view the abstract "Are Youth Baseball Coaches Using Pitch Counts?" visit aap.confex.com/aap/2014/webpro...nary/Paper27170.html.

AAP recommendations regarding pitch counts are available at pediatrics.aappublications.org...3/e842.full.pdf+html.

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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