

Help your kids stay injury-free during sports season

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Participating in sports can be beneficial for children's physical and mental health, as well as a huge part of their social life. However, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, emergency

departments in the U.S. treat nearly 3 million youth sports injuries each year, many of these being preventable with the use of proper safety precautions.

Here are a few safety precautions parents and coaches can take to reduce the risk of [sports](#) injury.

- Pre-participation [physical exam](#) (PPE). Before starting a sport or a new season make sure your child receives a PPE performed by a doctor, nurse practitioner or other qualified health care provider to ensure that they are healthy enough to safely participate.
- Hydrate and eat balanced meals. Make sure to bring a [water bottle](#) to all practices and games and encourage your child to drink water 30 minutes before and every 15-20 minutes while playing a sport to limit the risk of heat illness and dehydration. To ensure they consume healthy meals, review the school lunch menu to encourage selecting foods that will provide the most balance and energy for their day. Also consider packing your child a nutritious pre-game snack if there is limited time between school and practices.
- Stretching. Encouraging [children](#) to set time aside before every practice or game to warm up and stretch can help release [muscle tension](#) and prevent muscle tears or strains commonly caused by sports. Athletes should start with 10 minutes of light activity, such as jogging, and stretch all major muscle groups before every practice or game.
- Correct safety gear. Be sure your child has the proper protective gear and equipment for every sport. Some examples may include helmets, wrist guards, shin guards and knee or elbow pads. Some sports may require mouthguards to prevent dental injury as well. Consult the coach of your team to make sure all gear is in good condition, fits properly and is worn correctly for every practice

or game.

- Listen to your body. It is important to teach your children to understand signs and symptoms of common sports injuries or illnesses. Encourage children to tell a parent, [coach](#) or other trusted adult when something doesn't feel right. There is nothing wrong with taking a rest when needed to prevent a worsened injury or illness and taking at least one rest day a week can help prevent injury.
- Ensure coaches are prepared. If your child's school does not have an athletic trainer, it is important that coaches and other adults that support practices and events are certified in first aid and CPR, and that there is a first aid kit with them. They should also be aware of signs of emergent conditions that require immediate referral and have an emergency action plan that ensures efficient and effective transport to medical care if needed. Coaches should encourage players to sit out if injured, seek an evaluation from a physician and create proper hydration breaks to ensure safety throughout practice.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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