

Nine Ways To Ensure Your Players Stay Healthy

by: Todd Williams

Now, of course, there aren't any guarantees that you will have an injury-free season; but if you follow these suggestions, you will markedly increase your chances that any injuries you might have will be minor and will heal quickly.

You need to remember that children's bodies are ***NOT*** small-scale adult bodies. Children's bodies are still growing and can't take the same amount of physical stress that full-grown adult bodies can take.

1) **Stretch** - Stretching should be done at the beginning of every practice and every game. Pitchers should focus on stretching their arms and backs, catchers should focus on stretching their legs and backs. In other words, your players should stretch the muscles that will be used most.

2) **Warm-Up** - A good warm-up is just as important as a good stretch. Jumping jacks are a good way to start. Jogging the perimeter of the practice or game field is another good way to start. The warm-up activity raises the body temperature and gets the muscles ready to go.

3) **Pay Attention to Pain** - Pain is a warning sign, an indicator of injury. Don't ignore it! Take complaints of pain seriously, or you run the risk of even greater injury.

4) **Pay Attention to Swelling or Limited Range of Motion** - Swelling or a limited range of motion may mean a more serious injury than originally thought. Give heed to these warning signs.

5) **Rest Heals** - Rest will help an injury heal faster than any other therapy.

6) **Beware of Repetitive Stress Injuries** - Repetitive stress injuries are caused when stress is put on the same part of the body repeatedly. Players who play on multiple teams are the most susceptible for this type of injury.

7) **Strain or Fracture?** - Because children's bones are still growing, they're more prone to fractures than adult bones. What might look like a strain or sprain in an adult, can actually be a fracture in a child.

8) **Understand the Weak Link** - The growth plate (the area where the bone grows) is a weak spot in a child's body and is a particularly susceptible area for injury. Keep your players within their limitations physically to avoid injuries in these areas.

9) **Ice It** - Ice should be available at all games and practices. It helps control pain and swelling. Make a habit of bringing a small cooler full of ice with you to every outing.

Again, there are no guarantees, but follow these suggestions, and you're more likely to keep your star players healthy and performing for you the whole season.