

## Children's health: Safety in sport

Every day millions of youths participate in sporting activities. Participating in sport builds the body and mind, but can also result in injury if the proper safety precautions are ignored.

Young athletes are at an increased risk for injury because their bones, muscles, tendons and ligaments are still growing.

### Safety tips

The risk of injury should not keep a child from participating in sport. Instead, parents and coaches need to take the proper precautions by following safety guidelines and providing the proper protective equipment to keep young athletes safe during play. Parents, coaches and children are encouraged to follow these safety precautions:

- Know and follow the rules of the sport.
- Be in good physical condition before beginning any sport.
- Wear proper clothing and protective gear.
- Know how to use athletic equipment.
- Be sure to warm up before playing.
- Drink plenty of liquids before playing to prevent dehydration.
- Do not play when tired or in pain.

### Did You Know...?

RICE stands for Rest, Ice, Compress and Elevate. After being injured, an athlete should immediately rest, ice the injury to prevent swelling, wrap a bandage or towel around it and elevate it to drain excess fluid and reduce swelling.



### If injury occurs

Prompt treatment can often prevent a minor injury from turning into something much worse. The first step is to use RICE therapy (see box). If a child displays any of the following signs, he or she may need to visit the doctor:

- Inability or decreased ability to play.
- Visible deformity.
- Severe pain that prevents the use of an arm or leg.
- Symptoms which persist or affect athletic performance.

### Prevention

Most sport-related injuries are preventable. The following are steps coaches and parents can take to help reduce the chances of an injury occurring:

- Enrol your child in programmes where you know an adult will be monitoring the event.
- Be sure your child uses the proper safety equipment.
- Teach your child to start by warming up and stretching.
- Remind your child to cool down afterwards.

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