Baseball Safety for Children

More than 40 million Americans participate in softball and baseball each year, many of them children. Unfortunately, almost 500,000 players of all ages are injured seriously enough each year to seek medical attention. The most common types of baseball and softball injuries are related to being hit by the ball, sliding into bases, over-exertion, colliding with another player, and finger injuries that occur when attempting to catch the ball.

The February 5, 2003, issue of JAMA includes an article about preventing baseball injuries among children by using face guards and modified baseballs.

Many softball and baseball injuries can be prevented by following a few simple tips:

• Before your child begins participating in softball or baseball, take him or her to a doctor for a physical examination to determine if your child has any special injury risks.

• Be sure your child wears protective gear while playing. Helmets should be worn while batting, waiting to bat, and when running bases and should have eye protectors (either safety goggles or a face mask). Catchers should wear a face and throat guard and use a special catcher’s mitt, chest protector, shin guards, and athletic cup (boys).

• If your child is a pitcher, make sure to talk to the coach about excessive pitching. Throwing the ball repeatedly can cause arm, elbow, and shoulder problems, and your child should stop if he or she feels discomfort.

• Before playing, your child should do some stretching and warming up to prevent muscle pulls and strains.

• Make sure your child knows to stop playing and ask for help if he or she experiences any pain.

• Because many injuries occur while players are sliding into bases, breakaway bases should be used. These soft bases attach to the ground with snaps and are dislodged when a player slides into them, preventing injury.

• Use of reduced-impact balls is associated with a reduced risk of injury in youth baseball.

For more information:

• American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
  800/824-BONES (2663)
  www.aaos.org

• American Academy of Pediatrics
  847/434-4000
  www.aap.org

Inform yourself

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