

Follow These Safety Tips

More than 30 million children participate in sports each year in the United States. Of those 30 million, approximately 3.5 million children under the age of 14 are treated for sports-related injuries in hospitals, clinics and emergency rooms.

Here are six important sports safety tips from the Mary Bridge Center for Childhood Safety that all coaches, parents and league organizers can use to prevent sports-related injuries:

- **Pre-Season Medical Screening:** Every child should receive an annual pre-participation physical evaluation (PPE) also known as a sports physical. These exams may prevent or treat any underlying conditions the young athlete may have. The State of Washington requires that all students participating in organized sports have a physical examination by a qualified provider every two years to make sure they are healthy enough to participate in sports.

Before taking your child to the doctor for their sports physical, be sure to make a list of the following items:

- Questions for the doctor about your child's health
- Chronic medical problems
- Past orthopedic problems or fractures
- Current medications
- Allergies
- Family history of any heart disorders or sudden death (especially family members under 50)
- Any history of a concussion (or having their "bell rung")

Your athlete will also have their weight, pulse and blood pressure checked to make sure it is in a healthy range for their age.

- **Safety Gear:** To prevent acute injuries, children playing sports should have access to and consistently use well-maintained safety equipment during both practices and games.
- **Qualified Coaching:** Athletic coaches should be trained in both first aid and CPR, have a plan for responding to emergencies and have current knowledge of both safety rules and proper equipment use. Sports programs with certified Athletic Trainers on staff are ideal because they are trained to prevent or provide immediate care for athletic injuries.
- **Proper Conditioning:** To prevent acute and overuse injuries, coaches should teach young athletes proper routines for both warm-ups and cool-downs before and after practice and play. Sixty-two percent of sports-related injuries occur during practice rather than in a game. The most common types of sports-related injuries in children are sprains (mostly ankle), muscle strains, bone or growth plate injuries, repetitive motion injuries, and heat-related illness.
- **Hydration:** Athletes should be encouraged to drink water before, during and after practice and competition.
- **Rest:** If young athletes are very tired or in pain, coaches and parents should encourage them to rest, not to play, as this valuable recovery time can help prevent acute and overuse injuries.

What is a concussion?

A concussion is most often caused by a sudden direct blow or bump to the head. However, it can also occur as a result of an indirect blow to a different part of the body. Brain injury is the leading cause of sports-related death to children. There are some common physical, mental and emotional symptoms a person may display following a concussion. Any of these could be a sign of concussion:

- Confusion or feeling dazed
- Clumsiness
- Slurred speech
- Nausea or vomiting
- Headache
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Blurred vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Sluggishness
- Ringing in ears
- Behavior or personality changes
- Concentration difficulties



If you think your athlete has any of these symptoms, contact a physician immediately.

For more information, contact:

Mary Bridge Emergency Department: 253.403.1418

Mary Bridge Orthopedic Services: 253.403.1507

Mary Bridge Center for Childhood Safety: 253.403.1234

MultiCare Orthopedics & Sports Medicine:

Pierce County: 253.792.6555 • South King County: 253.372.6555