

Stay in the game

Your guide to sports safety



Sports have multiple benefits for children, both physically and emotionally. Children who participate in organized sports are able to develop habits for a healthy lifestyle while also socializing with other kids and making friends. However, with all of the benefits of sports, there is also a risk of injury. **According to Safe Kids Worldwide, 2.6 million children receive medical treatment for sports-related injuries each year.** We can begin to reduce this statistic by teaching you how to care for your child when participating in physical activity.

Preplay

- Your child should be seen by their primary care provider for a pre-participation sports physical, to detect any potential health risks of participating in physical activity.
- Be sure your athlete warms up before each practice and game.
- Teach children the importance of stretching and how to stretch properly. Stretching before physical activity can help prevent sports-related injuries such as muscle tearing or sprains.
- Children 10 and older are encouraged to participate in baseline testing. Baseline testing provides information about an athlete's normal level of brain function before a brain injury. This information can then be compared with test results after a concussion occurs.



Stay hydrated

- Ensure your child has access to an adequate amount of water during every practice and game.
- For every 20 minutes of play, a child athlete should drink about 10 gulps (7 to 10 ounces) of water.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of dehydration and other forms of heat illness.

Sports gear

- Children must wear the appropriate, properly-fitted gear to help avoid injuries. Equipment may include helmets, pads, shin guards, mouth guards and ankle braces.
- Wearing a helmet will reduce the risk of a serious brain injury or skull fracture. However, no helmet is designed to prevent concussions.

Make rest a priority

- It is important to set aside time for periods of rest during physical activity.
- Be sure your child knows to tell a parent, coach or another adult when they are hurt, in pain or not feeling well. This includes what to do when this changes during a practice or game.

Concussions

- Concussions are a type of brain injury caused by a bump or jolt to the head.
- In order to prevent a concussion, players must follow the rules of the game and always practice good sportsmanship.
- Signs and symptoms of a concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days or weeks after the injury.
- Concussions look different from person to person or from one injury to another. Symptoms can include:
 - Headache
 - Confusion
 - Difficulty remembering or paying attention.
 - Balance problems or dizziness.
 - Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy.
 - Double or blurry vision.
 - Sensitivity to light and/or noise.
 - Nausea or vomiting.
 - Slowed reaction time.
 - Sleep problems.
 - Loss of consciousness.
 - Not “feeling right”.

Michigan law requires all coaches, employees, volunteers and other adults involved with a youth athletic activity to complete a concussion awareness online training program. All young athletes, as well as their parents/guardians, must receive education about the signs, symptoms and consequences of concussions and sign a written agreement to acknowledge that this information was received.

If you suspect a concussion:

- **Seek medical attention immediately. Only a health care professional can tell if a concussion has occurred and when it's okay to return to play.**
- **Early recognition, evaluation and treatment of a concussion by an expert can prevent serious complications and facilitate long-term healing.**
- **Give your child time to heal. A repeat concussion while his or her brain is still healing can cause long-term health problems.**