

SOFTBALL SAFETY

A PARENT'S GUIDE FOR KEEPING KIDS IN THE GAME

SOFTBALL SAFETY

Softball is a non-contact sport so the risk of injury is much lower than other sports. However, shoulder, knee and ankle injuries are common.

This reference guide provides information on softball injuries that may require treatment.

SHOULDER INJURIES

Pitching and throwing can lead to **overuse injuries** in the arms, elbows and shoulders. While throwing, overuse injuries tend to occur when tissue such as muscles and tendons is damaged by repetitive motion activities. Without adequate time for recovery, the tissue cannot adapt to the demands placed on it and further damage is likely.

The damage caused by repetitive stress leads to tissue inflammation that causes pain. Symptoms of overuse injuries, also considered chronic sports injuries include:

- Pain when performing the activity or sport
- Dull pain even at rest
- Intermittent swelling
- Decreasing performance

If the symptoms persist, take your child to see her pediatrician or a pediatric orthopedic specialist. In each consecutive season, repetitive maneuvers by certain body parts can lead to fatigue and long-term damage.

ANKLE INJURIES

The most common injury in sports is a **lateral ankle sprain**. In softball, this injury is caused by rolling the ankle over the outside of the foot. This often occurs when the foot rolls over the edge of a base or when stepping on another player's foot. A lateral ankle sprain causes damage to the ligaments just below the bone on the outside of the ankle. In some cases a "pop" can be felt or heard by the athlete.

Treatment recommendations vary with the severity of the injury:

- Mild sprains require rest but not necessarily medical treatment (follow the PRICE treatment plan, printed below)
- Injuries with persistent swelling, pain or any deformity should be seen by a physician

HEAD INJURIES

A **concussion** is a brain injury usually caused by a sudden jolt or a blow to the head or neck and disrupts normal brain function. This can occur in softball from a pitch that hits the batter's



head or a collision at home plate. An athlete does not need to be knocked out, or have memory loss, to have suffered a concussion. In fact, most athletes who suffer a sports-related concussion DO NOT lose consciousness.

Signs of a concussion:

Others may notice that the athlete appears confused or dazed, seems unsteady or is unable to recall events before or after the injury. The athlete may report complaints of headache, nausea, dizziness, changes in vision, inability to concentrate or feeling "in a fog." Any athlete with signs or symptoms of a concussion should be removed immediately from practice or play, and not allowed to return to play until evaluated by a pediatrician or Pediatric orthopedic specialist. An athlete should not be left alone and should be observed following a concussion.

You should get IMMEDIATE medical help if your child displays:

- Loss of consciousness
- A headache that gets worse, lasts for a long time, or is severe
- Confusion, extreme sleepiness, or trouble waking up
- Vomiting (more than once)
- Seizures (arms and legs jerk uncontrollably)
- Trouble walking or talking
- Weak or numb arms or legs
- Any other sudden change in thinking or behavior

Returning to play before completely recovering from the first injury puts the athlete at risk for a more serious injury, long-term damage and even death. Any athlete who has suffered a concussion should be removed immediately from practice or play, and not allowed to return until evaluated by a doctor.

DEHYDRATION

Softball players are at risk of **dehydration** if they don't get enough fluid to replace what is lost through the skin as sweat and through the lungs while breathing. It is important to drink plenty of fluids before, during, and after a workout or game. An athlete's performance can be impacted by even mild dehydration.

Athletes should take a water bottle to school and drink between classes and during breaks so that they are well-hydrated before their workout. In addition:

- Water should be readily available when working out
- Athletes should drink often – ideally every 15 to 30 minutes
- Sports drinks are recommended for activities lasting longer than one hour to replace sugar and salt as well as water

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SPORTS CARE

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SOFTBALL SAFETY (CONT.)

Early signs of dehydration can be non-specific and include:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Thirst
- Decreased athletic performance
- Irritability
- Apathy
- Nausea
- Thirst

Signs of advanced dehydration include:

- Dark urine
- Disorientation
- Dry lips and mouth
- Decrease in reaction time

Athletes with any of these signs should rest and drink water or sports drinks. If the athlete doesn't improve, feels dizzy or faint, or has not had much urine output, he should be seen by a doctor. Seek emergency treatment if the athlete is disoriented, unable to drink or has pale skin.

BUMPS, BRUISES, TWISTS & MUSCLE STRAINS

These can affect all areas of the body. Recommended treatment is the PRICE formula:

Protect the area with a sling or crutches, if necessary

Rest the injured area

Ice the injury for 20 minutes at a time. Do not apply the ice directly to the skin

Compress the injured area with a wrap. Do not pull tightly, as this can cut off circulation

Elevate the injured area above the heart, if possible

Athletes should see a pediatrician or pediatric orthopedic specialist if any of these symptoms are present:

- Deformity
- Limping that lasts more than 48 hours
- Soft tissue swelling that gets worse the next day despite ice and over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medication such as Motrin®
- Effusion – mobile soft tissue swelling on both sides of a joint, often the knee or ankle
- Pain that returns quickly with activity at the next session or is not gone after two weeks of forced rest

SPORTS SAFETY

Children ages 5 to 14 make up almost 40 percent of all sports injuries treated in hospital emergency rooms. Injuries in children are best handled by pediatric specialists trained in treating skeletally immature patients.

Make sure your young athlete:

- Wears appropriate properly-fitting safety gear, free of heavy wear and tear
- Stays properly hydrated. Kids don't sweat as much as adults and need to drink plenty of fluids before, during and after activity
- Does warm-up and cool-down exercises before and after practices and games
- Gets proper rest and avoids overdoing it. Baseball, basketball, running, gymnastics and swimming are sports that cause the most overuse injuries in kids



SOFTBALL SAFETY

SPORTSCARE AT SSM CARDINAL GLENNON

Cardinal Glennon SportsCare is the premier pediatric sports medicine provider in St. Louis and St. Charles. We provide exclusive, direct access to comprehensive medical care for young athletes.

By working with multiple specialists and care partners, we guarantee your child will get the top care that is best suited to treat their unique injury, improving recovery time and outcome. Many of our services are offered in multiple locations so your child can even be treated close to home.

Specialists your child has access to through SportsCare include orthopedists, pulmonologists, cardiologists, radiologists, neurologists, emergency medicine physicians, adolescent medicine physicians, rehabilitation specialists, physical therapists, nutritionists and pediatric psychologists.

Partners your child has access to through SportsCare include SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center, SSM Orthopedics, SSM Physical Therapy and SLUCare, the physicians of Saint Louis University.

We also keep kids in the game through educational programs and support for parents, coaches and athletes that focus on injury prevention, proper technique and overall athletic health. SportsCare is a young athlete's best connection to sports medicine and athletic well-being.

For more information about Cardinal Glennon SportsCare or to find a specialist for your athlete, call us at **314-577-5640** or visit us at cardinalglennon.com/sportscare.



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Expert care for your young athlete by SSM Cardinal Glennon pediatricians and SSM emergency medicine specialists, 24 hours a day in the ER at:

DePaul Health Center
St. Clare Health Center
St. Joseph Health Center
St. Joseph Hospital West