Hey Batter! Batter! Swing [without pain] Batter!

Little League Elbow and Baseball Overuse Injuries

ROSEMONT, Ill--America’s favorite pastime continues to wield children into skilled little leaguers. Whether practicing the fundamentals of baseball or working on their throwing and swinging form, these young athletes are taking on a fitness regimen that patterns specific repetitive motions, particularly in their throwing arms and elbows. If not conditioned and rested properly, these overworked limbs could result in injury.

According to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission, in 2008, nearly 200,000 children aged 14 and younger, were treated in hospitals, doctor’s offices and emergency rooms for baseball-related injuries. The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons recommends that baseball players practice proper form and avoid over-exertion to prevent baseball-related injuries. And parents and coaches must be alert to guidelines for healthy play or signs of pain and trouble.

“With youth baseball programs becoming more developed and competitive, it is not uncommon for little leaguers’ bodies to become overworked,” said orthopaedic surgeon, Mark Pinto, MD. “It is great to see American youth be active and passionate about baseball. It’s just important for us, as adults or coaches to monitor the time each player spends on the field, specifically in regards to the number of throws or pitches and to make sure they are using proper form when doing so.”

To avoid being stuck in the dugout, the AAOS recommends the following tips to prevent youth baseball injury:

- Always take time to warm up and stretch before and after play. Research studies have shown that cold muscles are more prone to injury, specifically:
  - If a child is pitching, he should concentrate on stretching his arm, shoulder and back muscles.
  - If a child is catching, the focus should be on the legs and back.

- Children should not be encouraged to play through pain. It is important that they take breaks.

- Limit the number of teams on which your child is playing in one season. Kids who play on more than one team are especially at risk for overuse injuries.

- Wear a batting helmet at the plate, in the "on deck" circle waiting for your turn at bat, and during base running.
• Coaches must teach and allow practice of proper sliding techniques before using a bag, including breakaway bases. Players younger than 10 should not be taught to slide.

• Good communication between doctors, players, parents, and coaches is key to diagnosing and treating more significant baseball injuries. Young players may not be able to recall exactly how an injury happened or describe their symptoms in detail (they may even hide injuries because of concern about being removed from play).

According to STOP Sports Injuries, 20 percent of children ages 8 to 12 and 45 percent of those ages 13 to 14 will have arm pain during a single youth baseball season. Pitchers should not surpass the number of pitches recommended by USA Baseball Medical & Safety Advisory Committee:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Max. Pitches/Game</th>
<th>Max. Pitches/Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 - 10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 12</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 - 14</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 16</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>2 games / week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 - 18</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2 games / week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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