



Baseball / Softball

SafeTips from the Naval Safety Center

Quick and easy summaries to find out about something new you're doing or as a refresher for something you haven't done in a while. They're a great training tool to pass around at meetings, through e-mail, or post on bulletin boards.

Pitching too long or too many innings

Many injuries occur from excessive pitching. Most organized baseball leagues have guidelines about the number of innings that can be pitched, usually based on the player's age. While there is no concrete guideline for the number of pitches allowed, a reasonable approach is to count the number of pitches thrown and use 80 to 100 pitches as a maximum in a game, and 30 to 40 pitches in a practice. Any persistent pain should disqualify a person from playing until pain subsides.

Breakaway bases

Many players get injured while sliding into bases. The number of these mishaps could be significantly lowered by installing breakaway bases on playing fields. A breakaway base is snapped onto grommets attached to an anchored rubber mat that holds it in place during play. When a runner slides into the base, it can be dislodged to avoid direct contact and injury. During normal base running, the breakaway base is stable and will not detach.

Protective gear

Protective equipment is one of the most important factors in minimizing the risk of injury in baseball. This equipment must fit properly and be worn correctly.

- ⇒ Wear a batting helmet at the plate, when waiting a turn at bat, and when running bases.
- ⇒ Face masks that are attached to batting helmets are available in some youth leagues. These devices can help reduce the risk of a serious facial injury if hit by a ball.
- ⇒ The catcher must always use a catcher's mitt. If you play another position, ask your coach about specific size requirements for your mitt.
- ⇒ Catchers should always wear a helmet, face mask, throat guard, long-model chest protector, protective supporter, and shin guards when catching batting practice and during games.
- ⇒ Most youth leagues prohibit the use of shoes with steel spikes. Instead, wear molded, cleated baseball shoes.
- ⇒ Inspect the playing field for holes, glass, rocks, and other debris.

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Here are some additional tips for staying in the game:

- Stay in condition year-round with some form of regular exercise. Start with something as simple as brisk walking.
- Someone (a teammate, referee or spectator) should know first aid. Make sure someone on your team carries first aid equipment, particularly ice or ice packs.
- Don't go straight from your car onto the field. Arrive early and warm up with a walk or an easy jog. With sports where there are bursts of vigorous activity interspersed with inactivity, it's a good idea to move around or stretch during the idle periods.
- Stretch before the game, but not when your muscles are cold. Warm up a little first, then stretch gently. Afterwards, if you have had a vigorous workout, you can stretch more intensely. Learn stretches that are appropriate for your sport.
- Drink plenty of water or other fluids such as sports drinks during and after the game.
- If you start to feel pain, discomfort or fatigue, get your coach to put in a substitute. Don't overdo it.

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