

Best Baseball, Softball, and Track Injury Prevention Tips for Student Athletes

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Nowadays, we witness that children are less and less engaged in physical activity. Instead, they spend more and more time indoors in front of TV screens and computers, socialize more and more through social networks and spend little time socializing outdoors.

"Today, young people face many temptations to lead a sedentary lifestyle. And far too many do fall into this trap. Kids' technology use is rising while time spent outdoors decreases. Just one in three children participates in daily physical activity" (Connie Harrington).

All this results in an imbalance in the development of children, including weight gain due to lack of physical activity, asociality, and alienation, which can later develop into aggression. Physical activity

significantly affects the child's health and, together with a healthy diet, is a formula for a healthy lifestyle.

Baseball, Softball, and Track

Baseball is one of the three most popular sports in the USA, following basketball and American football. The most famous American baseball league in the world is MLB. Baseball is a team sport played on a field in the shape of a square whose sides are 90 feet long. In baseball, the leading defensive player pitcher, throws the ball toward his catcher while the attacking player batter, tries to put that ball outside the marked area to bring his team a certain number of points. Baseball is a very dynamic game with a handful of exciting moments, and it is great fun for young people who want to do some sports.

On the other hand, softball is a baseball subvariant played according to slightly different rules than classic baseball. This sport is suitable for young people and women because it is played on a smaller court with a slightly larger and softer ball, and the bats are shorter than in baseball. In addition, since the speed of the balls when hitting and throwing is less, softball is excellent preparation for young people who later want to play standard baseball.

Track means a list of various athletic disciplines, including running with or without hurdles. These include sprint disciplines such as the 100 or 200m, hurdles, long-distance races such as the 5,000 or 10,000m, the marathon, brisk walking, and many more. Unlike the previous two sports, track is an individual sport, which is excellent for the proper development of young people because it is a basic sport that will positively affect children's mental and physical health.

How to Prevent Injuries in the Baseball and Softball?

1. Preparticipation Exam (PPE)

Before baseball and softball players start competing, they should see their primary care physician or a primary care Sports Medicine physician to get a PPE done. PPE can help determine if they have a health problem that would prevent them from practicing the mentioned sports without hindrance.

The players' health should be first; therefore, all potential risks should be eliminated. If a player starts to engage in physical activity without a specific health problem being discovered, it could seriously jeopardize their sports career. The preparticipation exam helps prevent potentially much more serious conditions and injuries.

2. Adequate Equipment

In baseball and softball, players can experience unpleasant injuries. The balls reach incredible speeds, so it can be very inconvenient if the ball hits one in the face, shoulder, or back. For players not to experience more severe injuries, they must have adequate equipment and wear it correctly. Players wear protective helmets and depending on their position, they also wear other types of protectors.

The catcher should always use gloves, helmets, face masks, throat guards, shins, and chests. Batters should consider wearing protective vests. Players must wear comfortable shoes that will provide flexibility and convenient protection of the joints. Balls used at a younger age are softer, so the risk of injury is lower, but children need to be educated on avoiding potential ball hits.

3. Warm-Up and Stretching

As in any other sport, in baseball and softball, one needs to warm up the right way before the game. Setting aside enough time for warming up is necessary because potential injuries can be prevented. Baseball is a sport that engages almost the entire body, so it is advisable to do a few jumps and runs and finish with light walking before the game. All engaged muscle groups focusing on the upper and lower extremities and back should be adequately stretched.

The same should be done after the game. That part is by no means neglected. The player must stretch after the end of physical activity for their muscles to maintain flexibility and regenerate correctly. For stretching, the team athletic trainer can have a particular program to which the player should adhere before and after physical activity.

4. Rest and Hydration

Baseball and softball players should not be forced in any way. However, they have to give themselves enough rest after and before the next game. For example, pitcher and catcher should rest their shoulders, wrists, and all other body parts. One could use ice baths or ice bags for this purpose.

To adequately rest and for muscles to relax, it is necessary to ingest a lot of fluids. Getting enough water prevents the potential danger of dehydration, especially on hot summer days.

How to Prevent Injuries in the Track?

1. Fitted Shoes

As for the two previously mentioned sports, it is necessary to have adequate equipment to prevent injuries. You do not need a lot of equipment to do this sport, but it is essential to have good running shoes. The kind of footwear athletes will use depends on whether they are engaged in sprint disciplines or long-distance races. Improper and uncomfortable footwear creates a risk of potential injuries.

2. Conditioning

Athletes must be in good shape to play this sport. Otherwise, there is a serious risk of injury. Competitors must adequately prepare muscles, joints, and tendons. They need to warm up correctly, where you need to pay attention to the exercises that will affect and improve their strength, endurance, balance, and flexibility. After the competition, it is necessary to do stretching to prevent possible injuries.

3. Nutrition and Hydration

Proper nutrition and adequate fluid intake should be two critical factors for preventing injuries in track. It is entirely inconceivable that any athlete has an inadequate diet because it will significantly affect their performance. Also, athletes must be hydrated in the right way and drink enough water and sports drinks before, during, and after the competition.

4. Sleep

The competitors must get adequate sleep before, during, and after the competition. If the organism does not rest correctly, the desired results will not be achieved, but there is also a risk of injuries because the whole body regenerates during sleep. Athletes should establish the desired sleep rhythm, so they do not end up in a situation where they go to competitions restless.

Bits of Advice for Parents and Coaches to Prevent Injuries

Pieces of Advice for Parents

Mentioned sports and every other sport bring victories and defeats, and with playing sports, injuries come. Parents have quite justified fears, but sometimes they know how to overdo it with too much care as all other occupations bring with them certain difficulties, so sport brings unpleasant things such as injuries. Sports should be primarily fun for children, and parents should not force them to do something if children do not want it.

"Parents appreciate the benefits of their children participating in sports and understandably want to ensure they are as safe as possible. However, we firmly believe the benefits of sports far outweigh the risks, and there are actions parents can take to reduce the risk of injuries related to sports participation," said Tory Lindley, MA, ATC, president of NATA.

"For example, parents should ask about the coach's training, emergency action plans, and, most importantly, if there is a medical professional on-site to provide care should an injury or illness occur. Ideally, an athletic trainer would be present, especially for high-risk sports, to make those medical decisions and ensure your child's safety is the top priority."

Parents often have high expectations of their children. Some parents have failed to achieve their ambitions and then want to do so through their children. That is the biggest mistake they can make. Here we talk about very young people for whom sports should first be good fun and an opportunity to spend their time adequately. Parents should never force their children and put pressure on them. Everything should go naturally. Otherwise, children can fall on the psychological level, and due to heavy physical loads, they can experience very unpleasant injuries.

Advice for Coaches

Understandably, parents care for their children regarding sports injuries, but they should not overdo it. Before introducing their children to sports, they should know all the critical facts. A coach is a person who could be an idol of young players in addition to their parents. They are there to teach them to be good athletes and good people.

Like parents, coaches should not force a child to succeed at any cost. In this case, too, there should be no forcing or pressure. Injuries are an integral part of sports and can sometimes happen at an

awkward moment when a competitor is at the peak of his form. We should not rush with recovery but wait for the competitor to recover because health is the most important and valuable of every good result and medal.

Coaches should take a first-aid course to prevent minor injuries so they know how to react correctly in those situations. In addition to minor cases, coaches should know how to respond in some emergencies when breathing problems, heatstroke, fractures, and other serious injuries occur.

Final Thoughts

Injuries are an integral part of every sport. These are unpleasant situations that can disrupt someone's career. Therefore, it is vital that players and their parents and coaches react in the right way to prevent possible injuries. Coaches should also ensure that players have appropriate sports equipment, are adequately warmed up, rested, eat properly, and drink enough fluids. In addition to all the above, injuries do occur. In these situations, athletes must rest in the right way to not jeopardize their future careers and the potential recurrence of the injury.



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