

# ST. NICHOLAS HOSPITAL HEALTHSOURCE

## Play It Safe

Every fall at the start of the school year, many students are preparing to head back to the classroom and participate in organized team sports. Sports are fun, teach the value of teamwork, and improve physical fitness and coordination. However, participation in sports can also result in injuries. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than 3.5 million children under age 15 are treated for sports injuries in physician's offices and emergency rooms each year.

Children are susceptible to some injuries because their bones, muscles, tendons, and ligaments are still growing. In addition, these athletes can differ greatly in size and physical maturity, resulting in uneven match ups on the playing field.

"RICE"—Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation—is a simple, but effective treatment for many minor sports injuries. Other, more serious injuries may require treatment by an orthopaedic surgeon. He/she may prescribe physical therapy, strengthening exercises, a brace for the injured area, or a combination.

To prevent or minimize sports injuries, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons urges youth, coaches, and parents to "Play It Safe!" The Academy also recommends:

- Be in the proper physical condition to play a sport. Train for the sport, rather than expecting the sport to get you into shape.
- Wear appropriate protective gear, i.e., shin guards, helmets, body padding, etc.
- Know how to use your athletic equipment.
- Always warm up before playing.
- Do not play when you are very tired or in pain.
- Never use anabolic steroids or other substances in an attempt to improve performance—they can cause serious, potentially life-threatening complications
- And most important, foster an atmosphere of healthy competition that emphasizes self-reliance, confidence, cooperation, and positive self-image.



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