



Sports Safety Checklist

to help prevent common athletic injuries



Educating parents and coaches on how to help children avoid common sports-related injuries is a top priority for certified athletic trainers who specialize in the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of injuries and illnesses.

The National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) and the North American Booster Club Association (NABCA) have created the following checklist to serve as a guide for parents, coaches, administrators and athletes to assure a safe and healthy environment; reduce the risk of injury or death; and in the event of injury, offer an effective emergency plan of action.

BEFORE CHILDREN PARTICIPATE IN ORGANIZED SPORTS, PARENTS SHOULD:

Assess the financial and time impact on your family

In the excitement of having your child participate in organized sports, the family must consider the financial and time commitment required. Check your family's medical insurance to determine restrictions and limitations in the event of a sports injury. Often schools or leagues will offer supplemental insurance. If not prepared, the time and financial commitment can lead to increased stress on the family making their positive sports experience a negative one.

Determine if your children are physically and mentally "in shape"

Parents, with assistance from coaches, should determine whether their children are physically and psychologically conditioned for the sport/activity level they're playing. Athletes should be properly trained and matched against kids with similar skill level, similar size, weight and physical and psychological maturity. Do not push children into something they do not want to do.

Have your children obtain a physical examination

All children should receive both a general medical exam and an orthopedic screening, which will determine their readiness to play and uncover any condition that may limit participation. The medical examination should include checking the heart and lungs and assessing any medical conditions. The orthopedic screening should include joint stability, range of motion, posture assessment and a re-examination of past injuries.

Find out who's taking care of your kids

In the event of an injury or illness, who is going to provide care? In the case of interscholastic sports, is there a certified athletic trainer on staff? If not, who will provide care and what are their credentials? Parents should support hiring a certified athletic trainer to care for their kids. See "Athletic trainers: value for your school" at http://www.nata.org/ns/ppts/Value_Model_final_4.08.ppt to find out how. In sports leagues, who will provide care and what are their credentials? Consider calling on athletic trainers or parents with medical and first aid training and certification.





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Provide coaches with your child's medical history

Coaches should be provided with a medical history, listing any medical conditions, allergies and medications your child is taking. If there is a specific medical condition, instruct the coach on how to care for the athlete in the event of an episode. Parents should complete an emergency medical authorization form, providing parent contact information and permission for emergency medical care for their children. Check with your school/league to obtain the form.



Make sure your children are eating and drinking to win

Parents should ensure their children are eating a healthy, balanced diet, based on the USDA Food Pyramid. Without proper nutrition and hydration, young athletes will feel sluggish, increasing their chance of injury.

Ascertain coaches' qualifications

- A background check should be performed on coaches and volunteers before they are allowed to work with children.
- Coaches should have background and knowledge in the sport they are coaching. They should be credentialed if that is a requirement in the conference, league or state.
- All coaches should have cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), automated external defibrillator (AED) and first aid training.
- Coaches should strictly enforce the sports rules and have a plan for dealing with emergencies.



BEFORE CHILDREN PARTICIPATE IN ORGANIZED SPORTS, COACHES SHOULD:

Establish an emergency action plan

Every team should have a written emergency action plan, reviewed by their local Emergency Medical Service (EMS). Individual assignments and emergency equipment and supplies need to be included in the emergency action plan. If a certified athletic trainer is not employed by the school or sport league, qualified individuals need to be present to render care.

Keep an emergency medical authorization form on file

This form, required for each athlete, gives parental permission for emergency medical care if it is required. It should include contact names, addresses, phone numbers and health insurance information.

For more information, go to

<http://www.nata.org/statements/position/emergencyplanning.pdf>.





Inspect, maintain and instruct the proper use of sports equipment

- Sports equipment should be inspected regularly to assure it fits properly, is in good condition and meets national safety standards.
- Parents and athletes need to be instructed in the proper use, maintenance and sanitation of the equipment and uniform. The wearing of approved protective equipment during all practices and games (such as shin pads, helmets, elbow and knee pads, safety goggles and other regulated items) should be reinforced.
- Mouth guards should be worn while playing contact/collision sports such as football, ice hockey and basketball.

Check sports facilities on a regular basis

- Debris, rocks, water and other hazards should be removed from the playing field, court or rink.
- Before every practice and game, the sports facility needs to be inspected for safety. Ambulance accessibility must be considered for every venue.

Establish warm up/cool down flexibility regimen

- Athletes should perform gentle warm up exercises before every workout.
- Once warmed up, they should stretch using appropriate flexibility exercises.
- A minimum 15 minute warm up period should occur before any game or practice.
- A cool down period including stretching should occur after each workout and competition.
- Coaches should limit workouts and practices to no more than two hours – less for children under the age of 14.

Establish weather related policies

- Policies regarding inclement weather, including heat, cold and storms, should be established prior to the sports season and must be adhered to by all athletic participants and spectators.
- Preparations to avoid lightning should be made, including a designated plan that identifies who will “make the call” to stop activity and move participants and spectators to a safe area. For more information, go to <http://www.nata.org/statements/position/lightning.pdf>.

Create hydration plan

- Encourage children to drink fluids before, during and after an exercise session.
- Fluid breaks should be offered at least every 30-45 minutes (or more often during warmer conditions).
- Require athletes to drink either water or a sports drink. A sports drink may provide better results if the activity lasts longer than 45-50 minutes or is intense.

For more information, go to

<http://www.nata.org/statements/position/fluidreplacement.pdf>.





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Have heat illness program in place

- Prevent heat illnesses through medical screenings, acclimatization (exercising in the heat gradually over 10-14 days), conditioning, environmental monitoring, suitable practice adjustments, appropriate uniform selection and proper hydration.
- Coaches must be able to recognize the symptoms of a heat illness, know how to treat the minor conditions and know when to notify EMS for more serious illnesses.
- In the event of a heat stroke, a method to rapidly cool the athlete must be readily available.

For more information, go to

<http://www.nata.org/consumer/docs/parentandcoachesguide.pdf>
<http://www.nata.org/statements/position/exertionalheatillness.pdf>



Have well-stocked first aid kit available at all times

- Every team should have a first aid kit stocked with supplies for wound management and injury care. Athletic tape, elastic wraps, gauze, bandages and antiseptic ointment should be included.
- Ice for injury care should be readily available.



IF SERIOUS INJURIES OCCUR, COACHES NEED TO:

Contact EMS Immediately.

Answer the dispatcher's questions that will include the following:

- Where the injured athlete is located
- Information about the athlete's problem
- What is being done to help the athlete
- The number of the phone you are using to call
- Where someone will meet them to direct them to the injured athlete

Hang up LAST — let EMS hang up first.

Call the injured athlete's parent or guardian.

For a pocket size, coach emergency action card, go to

www.nata.org/consumer/docs/coachescard.pdf



Follow R.I.C.E. principle when injuries occur

All injuries should be evaluated promptly and treated appropriately. The first aid treatment for most orthopedic injuries follows the R.I.C.E. principle:

- Rest or immobilization of the injured body part
- Ice application for a minimum of 15-20 minutes
- Compression or elastic wrap should be applied to help prevent or decrease swelling
- Elevation of the injured body area above the level of the heart to decrease swelling





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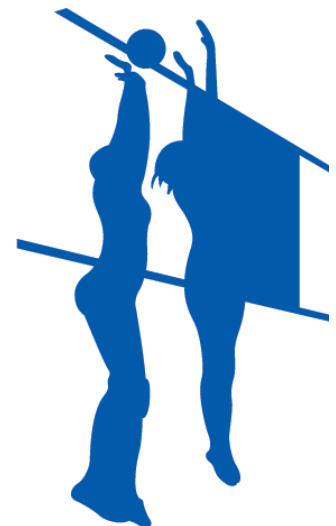
DETERMINE WHEN AN INJURED ATHLETE CAN RESUME SPORTS ACTIVITIES

- If a child suffers a head or face injury and experiences a headache, impaired vision, ringing in the ears or nausea, he or she should not return to participation until cleared by a physician.
- Athletes should be permitted to return to sports activities only when they can perform as well as before they were injured and can protect themselves from re-injury.
- If an athlete has been under a physician's care, the physician should clear the athlete for participation before the activity status is determined.



SPORTS SAFETY RECAP AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Develop a written emergency action plan.
- If there is no certified athletic trainer, train coaches, parents and officials in first aid, CPR and AEDs.
- Make sure that athletes have their own water bottles and stay well hydrated.
- Develop educational programs for parents and athletes regarding conditioning, strength training, hydration, nutrition, injury prevention and care, fundamentals of the sport and rules, or see <http://www.sportssafety.org>.
- Plan a mock emergency to practice execution.
- Determine what to include in a first aid kit for the specific sport.
- On a regular basis, perform a safety check of the facility.
- Develop a sports/parent "code of conduct." Always show good sportsmanship.
- Understand the fundamentals and rules of the sport and be supportive of your child and the coach.
- Arrange a pre-season meeting for parents outlining the school's or league's philosophies and safety procedures.



For more information, visit the [National Athletic Trainers' Association \(www.nata.org\)](http://www.nata.org) and [North American Booster Club Association \(www.boosterclubs.org\)](http://www.boosterclubs.org).

National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) – Health Care for Life & Sport: Athletic trainers are unique health care professionals who specialize in the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of injuries and illnesses. The National Athletic Trainers' Association represents and supports 30,000 members of the athletic training profession. NATA advocates for equal access to athletic trainers for patients and clients of all ages and supports H.R. 1846. Only 42 percent of high schools have access to athletic trainers. NATA members adhere to a code of ethics. (www.nata.org).

The North American Booster Club Association (NABCA) is the governing body and first of its kind national booster club association dedicated to providing booster clubs and their extracurricular organizations throughout North America with the highest level of guidance, education, training and support. NABCA supports the more than 1.3 million school, non-school, sports, music and arts based booster clubs who work to insure the continuation of extracurricular programs that provide life skills, build strong leaders and keep our kids in school, out of gangs and off drugs. (www.boosterclubs.org).

