

# Year-round sports increase risk of teen injuries

Preventing overuse injuries in young athletes is a hot topic among orthopaedists right now. Injuries in young athletes are on the rise and can be attributed to year-round activity in sports. In my practice at The Orthopaedic Group in Mobile, I see many athletes in the Gulf Coast area for overuse injuries. This is because kids are playing specialized sports at a younger age, and they are at risk to develop problems that could lead to injuries down the road.

My colleagues and I at The Orthopaedic Group have treated a variety of injuries in young athletes, from tendonitis in the elbow to stress fractures and rotator cuff tears. With pressure to return to play faster, young athletes are often pushing themselves too hard after an injury. Without proper rest, an injury does not heal correctly and could lead to more serious injuries as the athlete ages. In a time when year-round sports are the norm, it is important to work different muscles and joints, and not

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focus on one repetitive motion. This can be accomplished simply through having your child play a variety of sports.

According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS), every year more than 3.5 million children age 14 and younger are treated for sports injuries. Below are some recommendations to help prevent overuse injuries in younger athletes:

Get enough rest after an injury before returning to play so the injury will heal properly.

Encourage children to try different sports so they are working different muscles.

Parents, listen to your child. Complaints of soreness should not be ignored.

Limit the number of teams on which a child plays in one season.

An athlete should be encouraged to tell their coaches or parents about their injuries, and not hide injuries to avoid being taken out of the game.

Athletes should know pitching count guidelines for their age, and should not throw more than what is recommended.

Remembering these tips and knowing the physical limits for a child in sports can help prevent overuse injuries in young athletes.

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