



We can't eliminate all injuries and risk in youth sports; but, appropriate protective equipment and following rules and regulations designed for safety can certainly help. Importantly, it is essential to also implement evidence-informed strategies related to proper progressive, diverse and balanced training and conditioning to help develop more capable, prepared and resilient athletes. In some instances, targeted exercises and activities are necessary to further reduce the risk of incurring common injuries specific to different sports. Moreover, sufficient rest and deliberate recovery from individual bouts and periods of training, conditioning and competition are central to allow positive adaptations and minimize fatigue.

Overuse- and Overload-related Injuries

- Overuse- and overload-related injuries occur when the body is overwhelmed by repeated excessive physical stress and inadequate recovery periods causing a weakened condition and breakdown of muscle, tendon, bone or other tissue vs. a positive adaptation
- By far, these injuries are most likely to affect more athletes than any other sport-related injury
- While time away from sport is usually temporary, overuse- and overload-related injuries can permanently derail a youth athlete's athletic/sport career
- Importantly, in most (nearly all) overuse and overload cases, these injuries are preventable
- Athlete/sport development and enhancing fitness take time and cannot be accelerated by overreaching – that is, regularly pushing too hard
- Youth athletes are particularly vulnerable to overuse- and overload-related injuries during periods of rapid growth and physical maturation and with premature and/or sudden increases in training and/or competition load and demands
- The excessive stress often results in one or more areas of damage to the shoulder, elbow, knee, spine or other vulnerable area of a youth athlete's immature, developing musculoskeletal system
- Early adolescence is the time to focus more on sound functional biomechanics and technical aspects of a sport – not high volume and extensive loading from training and competition
- Coaches, parents and youth athletes need to appreciate and incorporate the essential elements of gradual progression, variation in loading, a sound functional athletic foundation and recovery/rest – all these measures reduce injury risk and enhance athletic/sport development
- **No youth athlete should train or compete when hurt – that is, when in pain or not completely rehabilitated and recovered from an illness or injury**

Injury prevention is the shared responsibility of coaches, healthcare support staff, parents, administrators, sport governing bodies and also the athlete!

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Youth Sports of the Americas is dedicated to provide an unparalleled platform for promoting inclusive, sustainable, healthy, safe and enjoyable youth sports participation.