

Sports medicine docs offer safety tips for young athletes

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Children should ease back into activity, wear properly fitted safety gear and stay hydrated.

(HealthDay)—Kids are back to school and back to sports, which inevitably leads to bumps and scrapes and possibly even more serious sports-related injuries.

Doctors in the sports medicine division at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center in Ohio say preparation is the key to reducing the risk of these injuries.

First, they recommend that [children](#) start exercising long before a sports season begins—at least four to six weeks earlier.

Children and teens should get used to hot weather workouts by gradually increasing their [time outdoors](#) in heat and humidity. This should take place over the first 10 days to two weeks of practice.

Young athletes need to drink plenty of fluids and take breaks every 10 to 15 minutes, the [doctors](#) said. They should wear light clothing and limit their exposure to the sun if they're outside during the hottest time of the day. One way to stay cool is to apply towels soaked in ice cubes and water to the head and neck.

If a child appears to be suffering from heat illness, move the youngster into the shade or coolest area nearby. Cool them by exposing their skin to ice or cold water and cool, circulating air, the doctors advised.

The doctors recommended that children with asthma should use preventive inhalers 20-30 minutes before exercise, do a gradual warmup, and have an inhaler close by during practices and games or competitions.

Young athletes should wear all recommended protective gear and it should be properly fitted. The doctors said youngsters should be instructed to immediately tell the coach or trainer if they feel dizzy, foggy, have a memory lapse or have a headache after taking a blow to the head.

Children with these symptoms should not return to the same game, competition or practice and should be checked by a doctor before they return to their sport, the doctors advised.

Each year, about 3.5 million American children and teens 14 and younger suffer from sports or recreation injuries, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) said. More than 775,000 are treated in emergency departments for sports-related injuries, according to the AAP.

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more about [sports injury prevention](#).

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