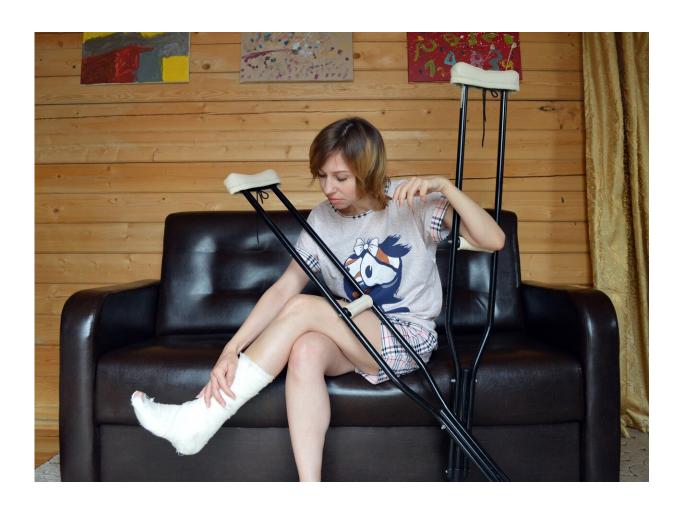# How young athletes can reduce their risk of injury

August 29 2022, by Alex Osiadacz

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More than half of children in the U.S. ages 6 to 17 participate in sports. With participation also comes the painful reality of injuries that happen

during gameplay.

Dr. Wes Troyer, a Mayo Clinic [physical medicine](#) and rehabilitation physician, explains how to reduce children's risk of [sports injuries](#).

From strikes and strains to footwork and fractures, injuries can happen to any young athlete.

Reducing the risk of injury starts with an annual physical to make sure children can participate. When it's time to play, warm up muscles by stretching, and use [protective equipment](#), when appropriate.

"It's important to try out your equipment before you get into game-time situations to make sure it works properly, so that it's actually protecting you when you're going out there to perform the sport," says Dr. Troyer.

Try to avoid overusing certain muscles over others. Repeated motions can happen around growth plates and may require [young athletes](#) to pause certain activities.

"They need time to rest because they've put too much stress on the area. And without that, they just don't heal," says Dr. Troyer.

If children are injured playing a sport, keep them out of competition until they can be evaluated.

"The worst thing that you can do is get up and try to play through these things and make the injury worse," says Dr. Troyer.

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Citation: How young athletes can reduce their risk of injury (2022, August 29) retrieved 19 July 2023 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-08-young-athletes-injury.html