



Who comprises the school's sports medicine team? Find out who will provide care to your child in case of an injury. NATA recommends that any medical decisions are made by the school's sports medicine professionals (physicians and athletic trainers) and not the coach, to avoid conflict of interest.



Get a pre-participation exam: All athletes should have a pre-participation exam to determine their readiness to play and uncover any condition that may limit participation. A young athlete's underlying medical condition can be exacerbated with vigorous, sustained physical activity.



Share an athlete's medical history: Parents should complete an emergency medical authorization form, providing parent contact information and permission for emergency medical care for the student athlete. Check with your school or league to obtain the form.






Physical and mental preparation is paramount: Parents, with input from coaches and athletic trainers, should determine whether their children are physically and psychologically ready for the level of activity or sport they're playing.

Communication is key! It is important that parents talk with their young athletes about goals, expectations, practice, competition and injuries. Ask your child open ended questions about practice and games. Watch for any warning signs that they might be injured, burned out or in need of a break.



Know the Signs of Potential Injury

-  Listen for complaints of an overused muscle or joint.
-  Listen for changes in the way your athlete feels about participating in a sport; a sudden change in attitude may signal an underlying injury.
-  Look for:
 - o Swelling, bruising, or tenderness.*
 - o Lack of mobility*
 - o Avoiding weight bearing during activities*
 - o Limping or favoring one side of the body*
 - o Pain when using a particular body part*
 - o Headaches or lightheadedness*
 - o Rash, irritated skin or blisters*



Breathe easier: Athletes with asthma should be properly educated about their condition, appropriate medications, and use of inhaler equipment and how to recognize “good or bad” breathing days to prevent exacerbations. A warm up protocol may decrease the risk of asthma or reliance on medications.



Use your head: There are between 1.6 million and 3.8 million brain injuries occurring in sports each year and 63,000 occur in high school sports alone, according to the CDC. Encourage your child to speak up if hit in the head and suffering from any related symptoms including dizziness, loss of memory, light headedness, fatigue, or imbalance.



Make sure your children are eating and drinking to win: Parents should ensure their children are eating a healthy, balanced diet. Without proper nutrition and hydration, young athletes will feel sluggish, which can increase their chance of injury. Inadequate hydration also increases the risk of heat illness.



Build in recovery time: Young athletes who participate in sports year-round are more prone to injury. Allow time for the body to rest and rejuvenate in between seasons. If athletes don’t make time for recovery, injury can occur. Acclimatizing to the next sport, with appropriate strength, flexibility and balance training, and the supervision of an athletic trainer, will help ensure a healthy season ahead.



Stay smart about steroids: Use of appearance and performance enhancing drugs can lead to a host of negative effects on athletes and non-athletes alike. Be aware of signs and symptoms of misuse including: rapid body mass or increase in performance; extreme muscular growth; abnormal or excessive acne, unusual hypertension, moodiness, aggression, depression or obsession with exercise and diet. Report this immediately to the AT or other medical professionals.



Make sure your child is using properly fitted equipment. Parents should check their child’s equipment regularly to ensure a proper fit and that no damage to the equipment has occurred. Properly fitting shoes, helmets, mouth guards and other equipment can help reduce potential injuries during practice or play.



Follow proper training guidelines. Parents should ensure that their child follows the instructions from the coach and athletic trainer on proper training and techniques in order to avoid serious injury. Following a protocol of flexibility and strength training is integral to a young athlete’s participation.



Mix it up! To avoid overuse injuries from repetitive use, encourage your student to participate in various sports throughout the year. This will allow for key muscle groups to rest and recover before the next season.



Warm up and cool down. Parents should make sure that young athletes also warm up and cool down before and after activity. Allowing the body to properly adjust to activity levels will help reduce injury.



Ensure an emergency action plan is in place: Every team should have a written emergency action plan, reviewed by the athletic trainer or local Emergency Medical Service. Individual assignments and emergency equipment and supplies need to be included in the emergency action plan. If an athletic trainer is not employed by the school or sport league, qualified individuals need to be present to render care. As a parent, knowing that a school has prepared for emergency provides peace of mind.



Does the school qualify for a Safe Sports School Award? If not, why not? NATA created the award to recognize secondary schools around the country that provide safe environments for student athletes. Find out more information at athletictrainers.org.