

## **BASEBALL SAFETY**

Baseball is one of our country's most popular recreational sports with more than 40 million Americans participating in softball and baseball leagues.

Here are some helpful tips that coaches, parents and athletes should know about.

### **Excessive pitching**

Many injuries occur from excessive pitching and improper technique, and can be prevented if players and coaches follow these safety guidelines.

To decrease shoulder and elbow problems from excessive pitching:

- Follow the guidelines about the number of innings pitched as specified by the individual's baseball league (a maximum of four to 10 innings a week) not by the number of teams played on.
- While there is no concrete guideline for the number of pitches allowed, a reasonable approach is to count the number of pitches thrown and use around 80 pitches as a maximum in a game, and 30 to 40 pitches in a practice.
- Any persistent pain or swelling should disqualify a child from playing until pain and swelling subsides.

### **Breakaway bases**

Many injuries to players occur while sliding into bases. These mishaps and their resulting costs (\$2 billion in medical costs) could be significantly lowered by installing breakaway bases on playing fields.

To prevent sliding injuries, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons urges all communities to install breakaway bases in their playing fields. A breakaway base is snapped onto grommets attached to an anchored rubber mat which hold it in place during normal play. When a runner slides into the base, it can be dislodged to avoid direct contact and injury. (During normal base running, the breakaway base is stable and will not detach.)

A traditional stationary base, bolted to a metal post and sunk into the ground, becomes a rigid obstacle for an athlete to encounter while sliding and often results in injury.

### **Protective gear**

Protective equipment is one of the most important factors in minimizing the risk of injury in baseball. Here are some equipment safety tips to prevent injuries:

- Remember your equipment must fit properly and be worn correctly.
- Wear a batting helmet at the plate, when waiting a turn at bat, and when running bases.
- Facial protection devices that are attached to batting helmets are available in some youth leagues. These devices can help reduce the risk of a serious facial injury if hit by a ball.
- The catcher must always use a catcher's mitt. If you play another position, ask your coach about specific size requirements for your mitt.
- Catchers should always wear a helmet, face mask, throat guard, long-model chest protector, protective supporter, and shin guards.
- Most youth leagues prohibit the use of shoes with steel spikes. Instead, wear molded, cleated baseball shoes.
- Inspect the playing field for holes, glass, and other debris.
- Observe proper safety rules for weather related problems such as heat illness and lightning safety. Athletes should have adequate fluid replacement and shade from the sun during hot, humid, sunny weather. Play should be stopped immediately and protective cover sought as soon as lightning is seen or any thunder is heard and play should not resume for 30 minutes following any thunder or lightning.
- Sun block is recommended to prevent skin damage related to sun exposure.