

PREVENTING BASEBALL INJURIES

Each year, almost 500,000 baseball-related injuries are treated in hospitals, doctors' offices, clinics, ambulatory surgery centers and hospital emergency rooms.

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons offers the following tips to prevent baseball injuries:

- Always take time to warm up and stretch. Research studies have shown that cold muscles are more prone to injury. Warm up with jumping jacks, stationary cycling or running or walking in place for 3 to 5 minutes. Then slowly and gently stretch, holding each stretch for 30 seconds.
- Your equipment should 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 leagues. These devices can help reduce the risk of a serious facial injury if you get hit by a ball.
- Follow the guidelines about the number of innings pitched as specified by your baseball league (usually 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 80 to 100 pitches as a maximum in a game, and 30 to 40 pitches in a practice.

- Wear the appropriate mitt for your position. Catchers should always use a catcher's mitt.
- Catchers should always wear a helmet, face mask, throat guard, long-model chest protector, protective supporter, and shin guards.
- Wear molded, cleated baseball shoes that fit properly.
- Inspect the playing field for holes, glass, and other debris.
- Be knowledgeable about first aid and be able to administer it for minor injuries, such as facial cuts, bruises, or minor tendinitis, strains, or sprains.
- Be prepared for emergency situations and have a plan to reach medical personnel to treat injuries such as concussions, dislocations, elbow contusions, wrist or finger sprains, and fractures.