



## Play Ball ! But Be Safe, Warn Pediatricians !

Baseball is one of the most popular U.S. sports for children of all ages. Pediatricians who have an understanding of baseball and softball can encourage children to participate safely in the game and avoid injury.

The rates of injury for baseball and softball are relatively low compared to other sports, but the degree of injury severity is relatively high. In the revised **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)** policy statement, "**Baseball and Softball**" in the March 2012 issue of Pediatrics, the AAP recommends prevention of throwing injuries by instructing kids on proper throwing mechanics and conditioning, and encouraging athletes to stop playing and seek treatment when signs of overuse injuries arise.

"Not everyone may know exactly when an athlete begins to show signs of overuse," said Stephen Rice, M.D., FAAP, policy statement co-author, "but it is important to know to never pitch when one's arm is tired or sore. Athletes must respect the limits imposed on throwing, including pitch counts and rest periods."

Additional recommendations include:

- All players should wear appropriate protective gear to avoid injury. Polycarbonate eye protection or metal cages on helmets should be worn when batting.
- Coaches should be prepared to call 911 and have rapid access to an automated external defibrillator if a player experiences cardiac arrest or related medical condition.
- All coaches and officials should be aware of extreme weather conditions (heat, lightning) and postpone or cancel games if conditions worsen and players are at risk.
- Not all children will develop at the same rate, so repeated instruction and practice are essential for young baseball and softball players to acquire basic skills when learning the fundamentals of the game.

"**Baseball is America's pastime,**" said co-author Joseph Congeni, M.D., FAAP. "In order to minimize the risk of injury and maximize enjoyment of the game, coaches, parents and youth baseball and softball players should be familiar with 'an ounce of prevention' guidelines. Being aware of a few issues regarding overuse, appropriate equipment, environmental factors and those rare but catastrophic injuries can help accomplish these goals and ensure kids are having fun and staying healthy playing ball."

