



**Should children with an
underlying medical
condition get involved in
sport? ►**

Absolutely, says Dr. Kathryn Keely, Canadian representative to the Committee on Sports Medicine and Fitness of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Doctors, parents, and coaches can work together to prepare children with chronic medical conditions to play sports safely.

The most important factor in involving a child with a medical condition in sport is that the appropriate people know about the specific problem and medical history and how to deal with it. Children should be taught to tell the coach if they are not feeling well. Coaches and teachers must be aware of the condition and have an emergency plan if the child runs into trouble.

Some children with asthma, for example, have no trouble exercising. But many must use caution because exercise is a known trigger of an asthmatic attack.

If a coach doesn't know a child has asthma, he or she might send the youngster charging off full-steam at the beginning of a practice. When the child begins to cough and wheeze and run out of energy, the coach might assume that he or she is out of shape. Instead, an asthmatic attack is occurring and the child needs medication to open up the airways again. The child will most likely have an inhaler on hand.

Exercise-induced asthma usually happens after intense activity. When coaches are aware of the condition, they can plan an appropriate warm-up which may prevent an attack.

Just as children with asthma may improve their health with exercise, daily exercise is absolutely essential for children with diabetes. Parents must make sure that the child is eating properly, knows how to monitor sugar levels, and learns how to recognize symptoms.

If your child has a medical problem, ask your doctor what sports are appropriate.