



**What are the
most common
sites of injury? ▶**

The knees bear the brunt of more injuries than any other part of the body. Knee injuries are particularly prominent when children become involved in organized sports such as soccer, ice hockey, football, or alpine skiing which involve a lot of turning and twisting or present the possibility of collision.

Ankle injuries are also very common. Children who participate in sports such as volleyball, basketball, and running face the risk of landing on an overturned ankle, resulting in a sprain or fracture. Coaches should pay particular attention to stretching the calf muscles and strengthening the muscles surrounding the ankle. Exercises that improve an athlete's balance, such as standing on one foot and rocking up on the toe and back on the heel, can strengthen ankle muscles and prevent injury.

How to treat an acute injury.

Begin treatment immediately. The RICE principle can be used as a treatment guide for all soft tissue injuries.

REST — Keep the child off the injured limb to allow healing to take place.

ICE — Apply ice for 10 to 15 minutes. Repeat at hourly intervals for at least 72 hours. Check the skin periodically to avoid ice burns.

COMPRESSION — Apply a tensor bandage through the day in the early stages. Remove it in the evening. Compression will decrease the swelling.

ELEVATION — Elevate the injured limb above the heart when possible. This will prevent pooling of fluid in the limb.

What are serious injuries in children's sport?

Head and neck injuries must always be taken seriously. So should growth plate injuries in children. A sudden violent force, which would cause a ligament injury in an adult, can cause a growth plate injury in a child because these parts are weaker than the ligaments.

Growth plate injuries are more common to contact or collision sports. One year-long study of 300 children involved in six different sports found five of eight growth plate fractures happened playing football. Though most growth plate injuries don't result in long-term problems, some may cause permanent damage to the bone, including shortness of the limb.

Other injuries could endanger the normal growth of a child. An adult could tear a muscle by extreme muscle contraction, yet a similar force could make the muscle pull away part of the bone in young children.

Undisplaced growth plate injuries are hard to detect on an x-ray. If an x-ray is read as normal and the youngster continues to limp with pain, the child should be reassessed before returning to sport.