

# How can parents and coaches prevent injuries? ▶



◀ **S**port physiotherapist Lorraine Hendry recommends these commonsense precautions to help maintain the safety of young children in sport.

- Provide a safe environment, using well-maintained equipment.
- Ensure that children are playing with others of their own size and ability, not squaring off against players who significantly outweigh them.
- Avoid performing harmful exercises like overstretching with a teammate or hyperextensions of the back.
- Avoid excessive repetition of sport techniques by involving children in a wide variety of sports. Encouraging youngsters to play a variety of sports and develop different skills reduces the risk of overuse injuries. Similarly, within the game itself, encourage each child to play different positions.
- Do not ask young athletes to perform beyond their capabilities. Poor conditioning and lack of fitness can lead to injuries. Just because kids are active doesn't necessarily mean they are fit.
- Recognize that body build or alignment problems such as bowed legs or flat feet may predispose a child to injury.
- Discourage children from sitting while their knees and thighs are rotated in and their feet are out to each side (see inset). This encourages the feet to turn inwards, making running difficult. Children usually begin this practice, known to practitioners as TV w-sitting, as early as age one or two. Cross-legged sitting should be encouraged.
- Choose sport programs that emphasize the four components of fitness — muscular strength, muscular endurance, cardiovascular endurance, and flexibility. A well-balanced, flexible body resists injury better than a weak, poorly-conditioned one.
- Begin every practice with a proper warm-up and stretching exercises and end with a proper cool-down including stretching exercises.



Suzanne Beaulieu