

Sports Safety Checklist for Coaches



Physicals and Preparedness

- I encourage parents to take their kids to a doctor for a pre-participation physical exam (PPE). These exams can rule out any serious or potentially life-threatening conditions a young athlete may have.
- I ask parents for emergency contact information (phone numbers, doctor information and allergy information). I store contact information so that it's handy during practices and games.
- I meet with parents before the first practice and ask if any players have asthma or another medical condition that may require special attention.



Warm-Up

- I make sure there is time set aside before every practice and game to warm up.
- I start warm-ups with about 10 minutes of jogging or any light activity then stretch all major muscle groups, holding each stretch for 20 to 30 seconds.



Hydration

- I make sure athletes have a water bottle for every practice and game, and encourage children to stay well hydrated by drinking plenty of water before, during and after play.
- I establish mandatory water breaks throughout practices and games – I don't wait for a child to tell me he or she is thirsty.
- I make sure athletes drink fluids (water is the best option) 30 minutes before the activity begins and every 15-20 minutes during the activity.
- I know the signs and symptoms of dehydration and other forms of heat illness. I educate parents and athletes so that they can be on the lookout as well.



Appropriate Gear

- I make sure athletes have the right equipment and are wearing it for both practices and games. The right equipment may include helmets, shin guards, mouth guards, ankle braces, shoes with rubber cleats and sunscreen.



Concussion Awareness

- I know the signs and symptoms of a concussion. I educate parents and athletes about concussions so that they can be on the lookout as well.
- I immediately sideline a player with a suspected concussion until evaluated and released by a medical professional. The important thing is to protect players who have had a concussion from getting harmed again. A good rule of thumb: when in doubt, sit them out.



Rest and Recovery

- I help avoid overuse injuries by giving all players adequate rest breaks during practices and games.
- I encourage players to communicate any pain or injury they may have during or after any practices or games. I make sure they know it's smart to tell me or another adult if they are hurt or not feeling well.
- I understand that kids should have at least one or two days off from any particular sport each week.
- I educate my team about the importance of an off-season. I recommend that kids get 10 consecutive weeks of rest from any one sport every year. Playing different sports throughout the year is OK.



Environmental Factors

- I check the weather to be aware of dangerous weather conditions, such as a high heat index or lightning during practices or games.
- I do a quick scan to make sure the playing surface is safe (no holes, big rocks or sharp objects) and that goals or nets are secured.



Training

- I am certified in first aid and CPR. I also have a stocked first aid kit handy at all practices and games.
- I'll attend a free Safe Kids Sports Safety Clinic to add to my sports skills and knowledge.

For more resources on how to keep your athletes healthy and injury free, go to www.safekids.org/sports