

Is it better to use sports drinks or water during physical activity?

It is really a matter of choice. When you sweat, you lose water that needs to be replaced if you want to perform your best. It is best to drink water before, during and after events. If you play more than 2 hours, you may benefit from a sports drink. Sports drinks provide the calories that you need after using up energy when you play sports. Otherwise, water is just fine for your child.

Nationwide Children's Hospital Sports Medicine Program

The Sports Medicine Program is designed to be a one-stop resource for all the athlete's health care needs. With a focus on prevention, every effort will be made to work with sports programs to decrease the number of injuries that occur. For more information, please call (614) 355-6000.

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Safety Series

Sports Safety



*Helping you, as a parent,
to make healthy and safe choices.*

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The questions and answers in this brochure are designed to help you, as a parent, to make healthy and safe choices for your children.

At what age can I start my child in team sports?

Children should be at least 6 years of age before they begin team sports. Before this age, get your child involved in sports that focus on learning and having fun.

How can I help my child pick a sport that is right for them?

Encourage your child to try a variety of sports. This gives your child a chance to build a wide range of skills. A child should not focus training on one sport before the age of 10. This helps to prevent boredom and loss of interest.

What are some precautions that parents and children can take before playing sports?

- » See a doctor for a sports physical.
- » Start getting in shape before the season begins.
- » Slowly work to increase your fitness level.
- » Make sure safety equipment is in good shape and meets national standards.
- » Be sure to do warm-up and cool-down stretches both before and after practice.

- » Drink plenty of fluids.
- » Make sure your child is getting the proper diet and enough sleep to keep up with an active lifestyle.
- » Make sure to take at least one day off a week to allow your body to rest.

I'm thinking about coaching my child's sports team. Is this a good idea?

Talk to your child first. Coaching your child does put more stress on him or her. Before choosing to work with any team, coaches are urged to take a class in coaching education. Nationwide Children's Hospital offers classes that meet Ohio Department of Education standards for coaches.

Does my child have to wear safety equipment in practice?

Yes. Athletes have a higher risk of becoming injured in practice than during a game. Make sure equipment is worn correctly and is checked for damage after each use. Remember, the bigger the crunch, the more pads you need.

Is it important for kids to warm-up before playing sports?

Yes. Most injuries are preventable. Light jogging and then stretching before playing help to prevent muscle strains and injuries.

What do I do if a teammate is injured?

Practice the S.A.F.E. method

- » Stop the activity
- » Assess—see what's going on
- » Find an adult
- » Emergency—call for help

Most importantly, never move an injured athlete. Leave that to the medical professionals.

I heard that nutritional supplements could be taken to increase athletic performance. Are these safe for my child to use?

Children need a well-balanced diet to perform in the classroom as well as on the playing field. Children that have good diets do not need supplements. It is important to know that some supplements are labeled as "nutritional." This means that they don't have to go through the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval process. Without going through the proper testing, there is little or no proof about the claims or side effects of these drugs.

