



# Baseball Injuries

Baseball is one of America's favorite sports, and it is growing in popularity among youth. Like most sports, baseball is extremely fun to play, but it should be played using ample care and precaution. Thousands of children are seen each year complaining of elbow or shoulder pain often caused by pitchers throwing too much. The ulnar collateral ligament (UCL) is the main stabilizer of the elbow for the motions of pitching. When it becomes damaged, it can be difficult to repair and rehabilitate.

## How is an elbow or shoulder injury diagnosed?

If you're throwing too hard, too much, too early and without rest, a serious elbow or shoulder injury may occur. If you're having elbow or shoulder pain the day after throwing, or if movement of the joint is painful or restricted compared to the opposite side, see a physician familiar with youth sports injuries immediately.

## How is an overuse elbow or shoulder injury treated?

The most obvious treatment for overuse is rest. Ice is also used to reduce soreness and inflammation. Ibuprofen can be taken to help with pain. Once pain is gone and full motion is present, a throwing rehabilitation program can start. If symptoms persist, it is critical that a physician be contacted. An examination and X-rays or an MRI should be done.

Under some circumstances, surgery may be necessary to correct a problem. Overuse and stress related problems can affect growing parts of the bone. If the condition is not treated, it could cause deformity of the limb and permanent disability. You should return to play only when clearance is granted by a health care professional.

## How can overuse baseball injuries be prevented?

- Warm up by stretching, running and throwing gradually
- Rotate positions besides pitcher
- Don't pitch and catch on consecutive days

- Concentrate on age-appropriate pitching
- Never pitch with elbow or shoulder pain
- Take several months off from playing baseball to allow recovery
- Emphasize control, accuracy and good mechanics
- Master the fastball first before breaking pitches
- Hydrate to maintain health and minimize cramps
- Create a nutrition plan for before, during and after exercise
- Adhere to pitch count or limit guidelines

### **Pitch counts/pitch limits**

Most organizations, groups or teams have pitch count or limits. Please find out what your league's rules are and make sure that coaches and athletes adhere to the guidelines. It is important to protect your arm from overuse, fatigue and injury.

### **Signs of fatigue for pitchers**

- Increased time between pitches
- Loss of velocity or pitch control
- Failure to maintain proper pitching mechanics
  - Reduced elbow height at foot contact
  - Changes in stride length, tempo and balance
- Increased time and effort to warmup

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## **Need immediate treatment for a baseball injury?**

The Children's Health<sup>SM</sup> Andrews Institute for Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine offers treatment for all sport-related injuries. Call to book your appointment today. With same-day and next-day appointments, we can get you in and back in the game.

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