

Baseball Injuries in Children

Elbow and shoulder injuries are becoming increasingly common in young athletes. The most common injury is damage to the ulnar collateral ligament (UCL), which is the main stabilizer of the elbow. This injury can be caused by pitchers throwing too much, too hard, too early, and without rest.

How is an Elbow or Shoulder Injury Diagnosed?

If a young athlete is complaining of elbow or shoulder pain, it is important to see a doctor right away. The doctor will examine the joint and may order imaging tests, such as an X-ray or MRI, to confirm the diagnosis.

How Can Overuse Baseball Injuries Be Prevented?

There are a number of things that can be done to prevent overuse baseball injuries. These include:

- Warming up properly before throwing
- Rotating playing positions
- Adhering to pitch count guidelines
- Avoiding pitching on consecutive days
- Not pitching with pain
- Not playing year-round

- Never using a radar gun
- Communicating with your coach and parents about how your arm is feeling
- Developing age-appropriate skills
- Emphasizing control, accuracy, and good mechanics
- Mastering the fastball first and the change-up second, before considering breaking pitches

Treatment for Overuse Elbow or Shoulder Injuries

The most common treatment for overuse injuries is rest. Ice and ibuprofen can also be used to reduce pain and inflammation. In some cases, surgery may be necessary.

Return to Play

Athletes should not return to play until they have been cleared by a doctor. It is important to follow a gradual return-to-play program to prevent re-injury.

Here are some additional tips for preventing overuse baseball injuries:

- Get a full physical examination before the start of the season.
- Work with a qualified pitching coach to develop proper throwing mechanics.
- Take breaks during practice and games.
- Listen to your body and don't push yourself too hard.

By following these tips, you can help to prevent overuse baseball injuries and keep yourself in the game.

Maximum Pitch Counts

Age	Pitches/Game
7-8	50
9-10	75
11-12	85
13-16	95
17-18	105

Source: Little League Baseball
Rest Periods Required

Ages 14 & under	Ages 15-18	Required # of Rest Pitches
66	76	4 calendar days
51-65	61-75	3 calendar days
36-50	46-60	2 calendar days

21-35	31-45	1 calendar days
1-20	1-30	None

Source: Little League Baseball
Age Recommended for Learning Various Pitches

Pitch	Age
Fastball	8 +/- 2
Change-up	10 +/- 3
Curveball	14 +/- 2
Knuckleball	15 +/- 3
Slider	16 +/- 2
Forkball	16 +/- 2
Screwball	17 +/- 2

Source: From work by James R. Andrews, MD, and Glenn S. Fleisig, PhD