



TIPS

for **Keeping**
Your Child
Healthy
& **Injury-Free**

 **Cooper**
University Health Care





Keeping Your Athletes Healthy While Playing Sports

Overall health is a critical element of an athlete's success. Now more than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical to take necessary safety precautions to keep your athlete safe and healthy.

You can take a number of steps to help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and reduce the spread while playing sports.

What you need to know

- Stay home if sick.
- Players should bring their own equipment, like gloves and bats, if possible.
- Reduce physical closeness and keep 6 feet of space between players when possible.
- Wear a mask if possible.
- Players should clean their hands before and after practices, games, and sharing equipment.
- Tell a coach or staff member if you don't feel well.

As a parent, you want the best for your kids. It's essential to take an active role in their health and understand what's necessary if an injury occurs. With information provided by the region's pediatric health experts—doctors from Cooper University Health Care—this guide covers essential health tips that will help youth athletes to perform their best and stay safe year-round.

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Healthy Habits

Good health is critical to a child's development. Success in school, on the field, and in other endeavors starts with good habits. As a parent, you play a vital role in your child's health, which includes working with a qualified pediatrician who acts as your child's health care advocate.



Dr. Heidi Weinroth, from Cooper Pediatrics in Moorestown, is one of the area's leading pediatricians and is a mom herself. With years of experience treating children, she has identified three healthy habits for kids who are active in sports.



"Water should be sipped before, after, and every 15 to 20 minutes during physical activity to restore fluid lost through sweat."

— Dr. Heidi Weinroth, Pediatrician,
Cooper Pediatrics in Moorestown



1. Hydration

Regardless of age, it's important to get plenty of daily fluids. For young athletes, drinking sufficient fluids prevents dehydration, which can effect strength, energy, and coordination.

Water should be sipped before, after, and every 15 to 20 minutes during physical activity to restore fluid lost through sweat. Popular sports drinks, which replace electrolytes lost through sweat, are recommended for athletes who engage in persistent physical activity for more than an hour to help replenish energy.

2. Nutrition

It's no secret that it's important for growing kids to eat well-balanced meals. This rings especially true for athletes, whose diet should include plenty of calcium, iron, protein, and carbohydrates.

Calcium is an important mineral found in foods such as milk, yogurt, and cheese. Calcium promotes strong bones and helps to prevent breaks and stress fractures.

Iron is a mineral found in foods such as chicken, salmon, eggs, and vegetables. Iron helps to carry oxygen throughout the body, which is critical during sports activities.

Protein is found in foods such as fish, meat, poultry, and dairy products. Protein helps to build and repair muscles that are needed for strength and movement.

Carbohydrates are found in foods such as pasta, brown rice, cereal, fruits, and vegetables. This important source of fuel allows athletes to perform all game long.



3. Skin Care

Spending long periods outdoors, either during practice or at games, can prove harmful to a young athlete's skin if it is not treated with sunscreen. It doesn't matter whether the day is hot and sunny or overcast and cool. Applying sunscreen reduces the risk of repeated sun exposure, dramatically reducing the risk of skin cancer.

Lotions with at least SPF 30 that screen out UVA and UVB rays work best for keeping skin healthy. Application should include all exposed skin, especially the face, neck, ears, and arms.



Concussion Management

Participating in sports promotes healthy development by giving kids the opportunity to engage in physical activity, learn teamwork, and focus on a goal. However, the pace and physicality of sports can present injury risks, none more concerning than concussions.



Dr. Thomas Drake, Director of Cooper's Pediatric Concussion Program, is a regional leader in diagnosing and treating youth concussions. An experienced advisor to schools and athletic groups on the topic of concussion, Dr. Drake offers the following advice to parents.



"While head injury is a potential risk in some sports, proper education and prevention measures can help keep sports a rewarding activity with a lot of growth potential."

— Dr. Thomas Drake, Director,
Pediatric Concussion Program



1. Signs and Symptoms

Diagnosing a concussion is not easy. There is no definitive test, and the majority of these injuries do not result in loss of consciousness. Therefore, it is extremely important for parents and coaches to have a high index of suspicion for concussions when evaluating young athletes after a collision or injury.

Parents and coaches may observe that an athlete appears dazed or stunned, forgetful, confused, clumsy, or slow. Sometimes the player may have changes in mood, behavior, or personality or may be unable to remember things that happened just before or after the injury. Loss of consciousness can occur, although this is generally seen in fewer than 10% of concussions.

Some of the most common symptoms reported by children and teens experiencing a concussion include headaches, "pressure" in the head, nausea, vomiting, balance problems, dizziness, double or blurry vision, and sensitivity to lights or loud noises; feeling sluggish, groggy, or confused; and just "not feeling right."

2. Initial Evaluation

When a sign or symptom of a concussion is recognized, the first evaluation typically happens at the sporting event and includes asking the athlete about symptoms and assessing their awareness.

The athlete may be asked about the current situation, with questions such as, "What team are we playing?", "What is the score?", and "What period is it?" Then a brief physical exam should be done to assess for concerning neurologic findings, vision problems, or balance problems. If a concussion is suspected, no matter how mild, the child should be removed from play.

3. Medical Evaluation

If a concussion is suspected, the athlete should be evaluated by a medical professional who is trained in concussion management.

This "follow-up" evaluation is important and provides an opportunity to check on any ongoing problems, discuss school reintegration, and formulate a plan for eventual return to play. Typically, this evaluation takes place across several weeks and may include a combination of therapies, school interventions, medications, and/or other treatments.

4. Prevention

Although there is no foolproof means of preventing concussions, many steps can be taken to help minimize the risk for our youth athletes. Coaches can help by emphasizing the importance of reporting concussions and supporting the athletes as they take the necessary time to recover. Parents can help by doing the same and by monitoring their young athletes for ongoing signs or symptoms that the child may or may not notice or report.

In addition, athletes must wear proper protective gear. When appropriate, it's important to wear a helmet to lower the chances of the most serious types of brain or head injury. There is no "concussion-proof" helmet; therefore, it is important for children and teens to avoid being hit on the head.

Urgent Care

It's a beautiful day, and along with the other parents, you stand by the sidelines rooting on the team. Suddenly, play stops and you realize that someone has been hurt. You do a double take and realize that the injured player is your child. Time is of the essence, and for non-life-threatening issues, urgent care is your best bet for excellent on-demand care.



Dr. Jillian Smith, Medical Director for Cooper Urgent Care, is no stranger to treating children. A mom of two little girls, she and her team are experts, with experience treating countless children's injuries across three South Jersey area centers—Cinnaminson, Cherry Hill, and Audubon. Dr. Smith has identified the most common

youth sports injuries treated at Cooper Urgent Care and provides recommendations for parents seeking treatment.

"All of our locations are staffed by board-certified Emergency Medicine physicians who are trained to evaluate and diagnose sports-related injuries."

— Dr. Jillian Smith, Medical Director,
Cooper Urgent Care



1. Injuries

When an injury occurs, you want the best and most immediate treatment for your child. It's important to understand that the type of injury typically determines where to go—to the ER or an urgent care center.

Severe and life-threatening injuries require a visit to the ER. These include broken bones associated with open wounds; head injuries with vomiting, confusion, or loss of consciousness; and injuries associated with severe chest pain or shortness of breath.

Virtually all other injuries can be promptly and easily treated at a Cooper Urgent Care center. Some of the most common sports injuries seen include contusions (bruises), fractures (broken bones), sprains/strains, lacerations (wounds), concussions, and other head injuries.

2. Treatment

For urgent treatment of sports-related injuries, it's important to seek superior care delivered by experienced providers.

At Cooper Urgent Care, we provide walk-in care for a wide variety of pediatric sports injuries. All of our locations are staffed by board-certified Emergency Medicine physicians who are trained to evaluate and diagnose sports-related injuries. These are the same doctors who staff the ER at Cooper University Hospital.

We offer complete on-site treatment, including X-rays, suturing (stitches) for cuts or wounds that require repair, and splinting for breaks/sprains. Our discharge navigator can help to arrange priority scheduling for follow-up appointments with orthopedic/sports medicine physicians and other specialists.



Take a Closer Look at Cooper.



For more than 130 years, Cooper University Hospital has been a valuable and highly respected South Jersey institution. We've built a reputation as one of the most trusted health systems in the region with nearly two million patient visits annually.

 **Cooper**
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For more information, a list of our locations, or to schedule an appointment, [CLICK HERE](#) or call **800.8.COOPER** (800.826.6737).

As an academic health system, Cooper offers patients quality health care, from primary care to specialty care, in one or more of its premier Institutes and Centers of Excellence, including:

- MD Anderson Cancer Center at Cooper
- Children's Regional Hospital at Cooper
- Adult Health Institute
- Bone and Joint Institute
- Digestive Health Institute
- Heart Institute
- Neurological Institute
- Surgical Specialties Institute
- Women's and Children's Institute
- Center for Urgent and Emergent Services
- Center for Trauma Services

Cooper is putting Your Health First with rigorous cleaning and disinfecting at all of our facilities, providing space to maintain physical distance, and requiring masks to be worn by staff and patients. It's safe to come into our offices and hospital.

