

risk alert



Listening. | Learning. | Leading.®

America's favorite pastime often leads to injuries

Baseball and softball leagues provide a wonderful opportunity for members of a congregation to get together and have fun. These leagues attract both men and women as well as children of all ages. Although participating in these events is an excellent form of exercise and helps develop physical coordination, it ranks only behind basketball and football as causing the most sports-related injuries to children.

More than half of all baseball- and softball-related injuries involve being hit by the ball. Facial injuries are most common. Players often misjudge the ball while in the field, they are hit by a pitch, or the base runner is hit by a batted ball.

Many injuries also occur when players are sliding into the bases. Most of the injuries caused by this are sprains and strains.



Most injuries are severe and preventable

Past claims provide some insight as to how easily preventable these injuries are: An eight-year-old boy fractured his right ankle when he slid into second base. The injury required surgery. Upon investigation, it was found that the base was permanently secured to the ground. The use of safety bases most likely would have prevented this injury from occurring.

A six-year-old boy was waiting for his turn to be the batter. Poor supervision allowed the child to stand too close to the other batter, and he was hit in the mouth by the other player's bat. The six-year-old lost several teeth. This injury could have been prevented with better supervision and the use of a face guard on the batting helmet.

Simple steps help prevent injuries

A coach can greatly reduce injuries by teaching the proper techniques of playing the game. Equipment also plays a big role in safety. Some safety rules to follow include:

- Install face guards on all batting helmets. These guards only cost about \$10 and can help eliminate facial injuries to batters and base runners.
- Use a softer-than-standard baseball or softball to reduce the hazards of being hit by a ball.
- Use safety bases to help reduce the frequency and severity of injuries. A safety base releases from its base when a base runner slides into it.

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- Inspect the playing field before the game and remove all hazards and debris.
- Keep all players not in the game on a bench behind a fence.
- Always have enough coaches or supervisors present when the games involve children.
- Bring a stocked first-aid kit to all games. The kit should include bandages, antiseptic spray, an ice pack, gauze pads and athletic tape.

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and look in the Safety Resources section.**