



Conversation Starters: When Play is Too Much

Every parent of a young athlete hopes their child will enjoy playing and get not only the health benefits of sports, but also the sense of pride and accomplishment that comes with being part of a team. However, some kids push their body to the extreme and lose sight of what's truly important --- their health! It's important for us as parents to remember our job includes listening and discussing, in a safe and non-judgmental way, what our kids are going through. You can use open-ended questions to get your child to talk about what he or she is feeling.

The following are a few sample questions to ask your kids about their athletic activity and physical level of comfort.

- "How was practice today? What kind of drills did you do? How long did you throw the ball?"
- "What was the most enjoyable part of today's practice/game?"
- "What did you learn today?"
- "That game was exciting. It looked like you started limping toward the end. What part of your foot is bothering you?" Be specific about what you saw.

Following up with gentle suggestions may help get more information from your child. For example, "It sounds like you really threw a lot of pitches at practice. Maybe we should just run around the yard, instead of throwing the ball to give your arm a rest."

How do I know if my child has an overuse injury?

Be sure to listen for complaints of pain in an overused area, such as the shoulder or elbow. Your child may not notice the pain until using the affected area when resting or sometime after practice or a game. Also notice any changes in how much your child feels about a sport. "I don't like pitching any more" may really mean, "My elbow hurts when I pitch." Once you have determined that an area is causing pain, look for tenderness and/or swelling over the injured area. If your child cannot move a joint fully, it is important to seek medical care immediately.

Remember to keep the lines of communication open and don't give up -- a lesson every parent and child can hold on to!

