

# Go Outside and Play – Safely

Shriners Hospitals for Children Promotes Safe Sports and Recreation during National Bone and Joint Awareness Week 2009



Sports and recreational activities are important to the health of all kids. It is equally important to be sure children are playing safely.

When we encourage our kids to “Go Outside and Play,” it’s very important to add one more word – “Safely.”

Participating in sports, riding bicycles or skateboards, and climbing on the jungle gym at the local playground are all fun, healthy activities for kids. However, injuries requiring medical attention occur during all sports and recreational activity – from basketball to bouncing on trampolines.

About 30 million children and teens in the U.S. participate in organized sports programs each year, and, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, approximately 3.5 million children under age 15 receive medical attention for sports- and recreation-related injuries each year.

In fact:

- Almost one-third of childhood injuries are sports or recreation-related.
- More than 200,000 preschool and elementary school-age children are

injured on playgrounds each year, primarily from falls.

- Approximately half of all childhood sports and recreation-related injuries involve bicycles, skates and skateboards.
- Children ages 5-14 incur almost half of all sports-related injuries, and more than 775,000 of them receive treatment in an emergency room.
- The most serious injuries happen during individual activities.

Many of these injuries can be prevented by following simple safety tips and guidelines. For example, always be sure the children:

- Have appropriate, properly fitting, sports-specific equipment and protection for games and practices, and know how to use it
- Do conditioning, strengthening and stretching exercises appropriate to the sport or recreational activity
- Learn the proper technique for the movements of the game (pitching, swinging a bat, protecting a goal, etc.)
- Will stop playing if they experience pain or feel very tired
- Drink plenty of fluids, and understand the importance of staying hydrated

It’s also important to be aware that children, especially those under age 8, are particularly susceptible to injury because they are still growing and developing. Another factor to consider is the amount of time children spend on a single sport. Too much concentration on one sport or activity can cause muscle strains, stress fractures or damage to growth plates from overuse or repetitive motion.

As an international health care system that provides expert pediatric orthopaedic care, Shriners Hospitals for Children is encouraging and

emphasizing preventing injuries related to sports and recreation during National Bone and Joint Awareness Week, Oct. 12-20, as well as providing tips to help parents ensure their kids’ recreational safety.

The 19 Shriners Hospitals for Children specializing in orthopaedics can provide expert information and resources on these and many other pediatric orthopaedic conditions.

U.S. Bone and Joint Awareness Week is an extension of U.S. Bone and Joint Decade, which continues through 2011. The Decade is supported by many organizations; several, like Shriners Hospitals for Children, emphasize pediatrics.

During Bone and Joint Awareness Week, these organizations, including the Pediatric Orthopaedic Society of North America, and the American Academy of Pediatrics, will place an intense effort on increasing public understanding and awareness of musculoskeletal injuries and disorders. Equal attention will be given to injury prevention.

For more information about Shriners Hospitals for Children, please visit [www.shrinershospitals.org](http://www.shrinershospitals.org). For information about Bone and Joint Awareness Week, visit [www.shrinershq.org/Shrine/template\\_communications/US\\_bone\\_and\\_joint.aspx](http://www.shrinershq.org/Shrine/template_communications/US_bone_and_joint.aspx) and [www.usbjd.org](http://www.usbjd.org).



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