



Take Me Out to the Ballgame

BREAKTHRU Doctor of Physical Therapy

Stretching and proper preparation for the season can help prevent shoulder or elbow injuries.

The shoulder joint is made up of the humerus (arm bone) and scapula (shoulder blade). Strength of the muscles surrounding the scapula as well as the rotator cuff must be adequate for proper force distribution when throwing. Rounded shoulders or weakness of those muscles can predispose the shoulder joint to an overuse injury, which could be a tendonitis/tendonosis, instability, or little league shoulder.

Tendonitis results when irritation of a muscle produces small tears within the muscle mass. Over time, the acute inflammation ends, and the microtears scar down and restrict muscle movement. This more chronic condition is called tendonosis. Shoulder instability can result from weakness of the muscles surrounding the scapula and rotator cuff allowing too much movement in the shoulder. Little league shoulder occurs when the growth plate of the humerus becomes inflamed from poor mechanics or too much throwing.

Tips to protect the shoulder:

- 1) Stretch – Make sure you pay special attention to the back and under the shoulder to maximize function. Also, work on stretching the legs and trunk because tightness in these areas will put extra stress on the shoulder and elbow.
- 2) Strengthen – Spend time on improving the strength of the muscles in between the shoulder blades as well as the rotator cuff. Adequate scapular strength is key to ensuring proper mechanics at the shoulder during throwing.
- 3) Warm up – Stretch and perform shoulder circles before you throw. Start at a short distance at sub maximal speed before moving farther apart with your partner and throwing harder.
- 4) Avoid overthrowing – The National Little League Association has put out pitch count and days rest requirements. Make sure the coaches and parents as well as the players are familiar with the limitations.

Age	Pitch Count Limit	
17-18	105 per day	
13-16	95 per day	
11-12	85 per day	
10 and under	75 per day	

Days rest	Under 16 years old	17-18 years old
0	1-20 pitches	1-25 pitches
1	21-40 pitches	26-50 pitches
2	41-60 pitches	51-75 pitches
3	61 + pitches	76 + pitches

By following these tips, you should greatly reduce your risk of shoulder injuries. For details of the stretches or strengthening exercises, ask a qualified sports Physical Therapist. Best of luck to all the players to make sure that this season you're saying take me out to the ballgame, not take me out of the ballgame.

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