

Acknowledgments

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SMARTPLAY

Facts and
safety tips for
BASEBALL



MONASH UNIVERSITY



ACCIDENT RESEARCH CENTRE

PREVENTING BASEBALL INJURIES



SPORT AND
RECREATION
VICTORIA

Facts on Baseball Injuries

How many baseballers?

- ▶ In 1993 there were 143,100 players formally registered with the Australian Baseball Federation.

How many injuries?

- ▶ Baseball injuries rank 13th (for children) and 16th (for adults) in terms of sport and recreation injury presentations to Australian hospital emergency departments.

Who is injured?

- ▶ Although baseballers of all ages and levels of experience are injured, males aged 10 to 24 years are the most commonly injured group of baseballers in Australia.
- ▶ Of those injuries to baseballers, 47% child and 88% of adult cases occurred during formal play.

When do injuries occur?

- ▶ Available evidence suggests that injuries are more likely to occur at the start of the baseball season.

The cause and type of injuries

- ▶ The most common cause of injury for baseballers is being hit by the ball. Also common are injuries associated with sliding to base (more common in adults), over-exertion, falls, collision with another player, misjudged catches resulting in a finger injuries and being hit by the baseball bat (more common in children).
- ▶ Impacts with standard stationary bases while sliding incorrectly to base can cause serious hand and feet injuries.
- ▶ Injuries to child baseballers are mostly to the head/face, including bruising, lacerations and concussion. Finger injuries, particularly strains/sprains, are also common.

- ▶ Injuries to adult baseballers are mostly strains/sprains to the ankle or knee and fractures to the nose or tibia/fibula.

Safety tips for baseball

Good preparation is important

- ▶ Undertake pre-season stretching/strengthening programs to assist in the prevention of overuse injuries associated with pitching.
- ▶ Undertake a good stretching program and proper warm up for limbs before and after play and a comprehensive conditioning program to develop flexibility, endurance and strength.

Good technique and practices will help prevent overuse injury

- ▶ Coaches should conduct pre-season stretching/strengthening programs; evaluate and correct pitching techniques; and limit the number of pitches thrown by an individual player.
- ▶ Coaches should limit the number of pitches per week for each player, make rest periods between pitching mandatory and teach proper pitching techniques.

Wear appropriate safety equipment

- ▶ Wear good quality, double eared helmets with face protectors which will protect the face from the tip of the nose to below the chin, including the teeth and facial bones.
- ▶ Wear energy absorbing chest padding when batting, pitching or catching to distribute any blows from a baseball impact over a broad area of the chest.
- ▶ Always wear shin protection, breast plate and a helmet with a mask when playing in the catchers position.

- ▶ Children players should wear properly fitted genital protectors at all times in the field.

Modify playing environments to improve safety

- ▶ Use breakaway/quick release bases instead of standard stationary bases to reduce the load impact generated should a player impact with the base. Standard bases are not designed to absorb the force of a sliding player and can cause serious injuries to the hands and feet upon impact.
- ▶ An American study has estimated that the use of break-away bases could represent a 80% reduction in the risk of injury involved with sliding.
- ▶ Pad fences, walls and posts to help prevent injury if players run in to them when attempting to catch the ball.

Modify rules for children

- ▶ Encourage children to play TeeBall as a means of developing good technique.

Other safety tips

- ▶ Use protective screening to protect players in dugouts and on benches.
- ▶ Ensure playing fields and facilities are well maintained.
- ▶ Players should be instructed to slide in the correct manner.
- ▶ Safety screens should be used during practice, particularly for batting practice.

If an injury occurs

- ▶ Ensure all injured baseballers receive adequate treatment and full rehabilitation before resuming play.