

Choosing a Sport for Your Child

Kids enjoy sports programs. In addition to having fun, organized sports help kids: develop new skills, meet new friends, and learn respect and teamwork.

Sports teams can also have a *negative* impact on a child. The negative behaviors children learn can last a lifetime. Parents must choose their child's sport, team and coach with care.

How can you make sports a positive experience for your child?

1. Match the sport to your child's skill and interest. Know the skills she has and will need to play. Some kids prefer non-team sports like martial arts, gymnastics or golf.
2. Allow him to try several sports. Let him choose the sport. However, pick only **one** sport per season.
3. Choose a good coach. Most coaches are volunteers with an interest in the sport. However, they should also have the ability to teach and lead. A knowledge of child development is helpful.

4. Ask about criminal background checks for all coaches.
5. Make sure the coach has CPR and first aid training.
6. Know the safety rules of the sport. Make sure the team follows these rules.
7. Ask if the team cuts kids who do not meet certain standards. You do not want a team whose focus is strictly to win.

Inquire about all the team costs – sign-up fees, equipment and travel expenses– before you sign up. Traveling sports teams can be expensive.

Organized sports should not replace regular physical activity and free play. Your child should **exercise one hour** every day and have time to play inside or outside.

Once your child joins a team:

- Schedule a physical exam with his doctor.
- Attend games.
- Watch to make sure she is having fun. Playing on a youth sports team should be stress-free.
- Balance practice times with periods of rest. The number one cause of injury is exhaustion. Kids need rest between games and practice.



Brought to you by Parent Help Line at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital to help keep kids safe, healthy and happy.



Call the Parent Help Line. Help is just a phone call away.
1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week
www.parenthelpline.org

Revised 2017

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