

The Safety of the child-athlete is the first priority of every coach. The keys to safety are planning and supervision. No child participates without a pre-participation examination. The coach's plan must include warm-up, hydration and recovery. Knowing the risk in each activity and the supervision of every child for any signs of injury is the coach's primary responsibility.



Keeping Things Safe

Good coaching practices to reduce risk

- Plan all coaching sessions
- Follow child protection guidelines
- Conduct pre-participation screening using a medical history form (see example form in the templates for coaches area)
- Ensure participants warm up prior to activity
- Don't mismatch participants (consider size/strength, not age)
- Clearly establish the rules for behavior and activities
- Ensure the safety of playing areas, facilities and equipment
- Require participants to use protective devices

- Adapt activities for environmental conditions (eg. hot, humid, or cold, wet conditions)
- Cater for individual needs.

Tips for ensuring the safety of playing areas. Ensure that:

- the playing area is level, firm and free from obstructions eg holes or exposed sprinkler heads
- permanent fixtures such as goal posts are padded, flexible and highly visible
- corner posts and other field posts cannot injure participants on contact (these should be made of cardboard or other 'non-threatening' material)
- there is adequate lighting if playing at night
- there is adequate matting where necessary (eg, gymnastics, high jump)
- perimeter fences are well back from the playing area
- spectators are kept well away from the playing area.

Tips for ensuring the safety of protective equipment. Check that protective equipment:

- is worn by participants during training and competition.
- fits the participant correctly • is regularly checked and maintained
- is specific and appropriate for the sport, size and age of the participant
- is being used according to the manufacturer's guidelines and the recommendations of the governing sporting body.

Tips for ensuring the safety of environmental conditions In hot or humid conditions:

- encourage participants to wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing made from a natural fiber (ie. cotton).
- avoid intense activity in hot or humid conditions and monitor participants carefully for signs of heat illness.
- help participants avoid sunburn by encouraging them to slip on a t-shirt, slop on some sunscreen, slap on a hat.

- encourage participants to drink plenty of fluid before the activity begins and schedule regular drink breaks during the activity

In cold and/or wet conditions:

- encourage participants wear clothing that is appropriate for cold conditions (eg. dress in layers to trap heat, wear gloves and a hat to reduce heat loss).
- avoid participants standing exposed to the cold for long periods
- encourage participants to change wet clothing as soon as practicable
- alternative venues (eg, indoors) should also be considered, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of participants.
- be encouraged to wear warm clothing. Coaches should plan training sessions to avoid long breaks. Another warm-up period may be needed if long rest periods cannot be avoided.