



# preventing injury and burnout

Playing sports comes with the risk of getting injured. Despite this risk, sports are popular because athletes decide that the benefit of playing sports outweighs the risk of injury. However, children are getting more serious injuries at younger ages than prior generations. They are also burning out and quitting their sport at higher rates and at younger ages than prior generations. When does the risk of playing a sport outweigh its benefits? How much is too much?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has studied some of the reasons for this. They found participation patterns among athletes with higher rates of injuries and burnout and wrote recommendations to reduce these risks.

**The following recommendations come from various sets of AAP Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness guidelines:**

## do

- Make sure hours of organized sports\* per week do not exceed a child's age (until age 16)
- Take one day completely off from exercise each week
- Play multiple sports until high school, preferably until age 16



## don't

- Play the same sport more than eight months per year
- Participate in organized sports\* more than 10 months per year
- Play more than one sport during the same season



These guidelines are very difficult to follow in today's sports culture. With some sports, it is nearly impossible. Data shows that young athletes who exceed these guidelines have higher rates of injury, burnout and quitting sports compared to those who do not. Ultimately, choosing how closely to follow these guidelines is a family decision. All sports participation is a risk/benefit decision. As the limits are pushed, the risks go up. Families are better equipped to make these decisions for their athletes when they have this information.

\*organized sports = any sort of exercise activity where an adult is involved with structuring the activity. This includes when it happens, how long it lasts, what activities are involved, how intense the exercise is, when breaks are allowed, when the exercise ends, and intervening / enforcing rules or disagreements. Examples include sports teams, gym class, personal coaching, family workouts. Neighborhood pickup games, without adults, do not count towards this limit.

