

A Newsletter
from the Anne
Arundel County
Department
of Health

Every year thousands of kids participate in recreational sports teams in Anne Arundel County. That's a lot! For these players, coaches are among their most important role models. When coaches talk, kids listen. That's why the Anne Arundel County Department of Health wants coaches to help kids stay healthy. By educating players on the dangers of tobacco, drugs and alcohol and by encouraging them to have healthy habits, coaches can make a difference in children's lives on and off the playing field.

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Tobacco-Free Sports

Organized sports are a great way to teach kids about teamwork, sportsmanship and following the rules. One life-saving lesson coaches can share with players is to be tobacco-free.

Did you know that smoking is the most preventable cause of premature death in America? Smoking hurts individual performance and lessens team achievement. Every day in the United States, more than 6,000 teens and pre-teens try their first cigarette. More than half of them will become addicted. Most adult smokers in Anne Arundel County report that they smoked their first cigarette between the ages of 12 and 17. By coaching kids to stay away from cigarettes and tobacco products now, you can help prevent them from developing a tobacco habit later. Coaches can be role models for players by enforcing the Department of Recreation and Parks' Tobacco-Free Recreational Facilities Guidelines. There is no room for tobacco in sports.

Many Recreation and Parks teams have participated in the Tobacco-Free Sports initiative, a project that provides coaches with key talking points and free materials. Coaches can request Tobacco-Free Sports information by calling the Smoking Stinks Program of the Anne Arundel County Department of Health at 410-222-7370. ■



Sports and Dental Injuries

Though there are certain risks associated with any sport, you can reduce the chance and severity of injuries by ensuring that players wear proper protective gear and use appropriate equipment. Dental injuries are some of the most common in sports, but they are usually preventable. Players should wear mouthguards to reduce the chance of getting a dental injury. Athletes should never participate in a game or practice without the proper equipment. Shin guards, helmets and gloves are required for a reason! ■

Peak Performance Tips

Hydration Junction

When kids don't get enough to drink, they can have decreased physical performance, fatigue or heat-related illnesses, such as heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Keep players cool and hydrated by following these gulp guidelines:



- 8-16 gulps (4-8 oz) of water before play
- 8 gulps (4 oz) of water every 15-20 minutes during play
- 32 gulps (16 oz) of water after play

Supply kids with cool water. Soda, fruit-flavored drinks and sports drinks are high

in sugar and caffeine that kids don't need!

Food Fuel

Give players fruits, vegetables and whole grains instead of junk food to re-fuel after practices and games. Hand out a healthy snack sign-up sheet for parents that lists snacks such as carrots, bananas, apples, trail mix or whole grain crackers with cheese. Ask parents to sign up and bring a healthy snack for the whole team to enjoy.

Sunscreen Station

A few serious sunburns can increase a child's risk of skin cancer later in life. Encourage players to use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher at every outdoor sports event to reduce their risk of developing the most common and preventable form of cancer—skin cancer. ■

Sideline the Spread of Germs and Diseases

Athletes who come in close contact with others on the field or on the sidelines can share infections. Bacterial meningitis is one example of a serious illness that can be transmitted from person to person through close contact like drinking from the same bottle. Head lice and certain skin infections can also be easily passed from one child to another by close physical contact and sharing athletic apparel and equipment.

By following this To Do List, you can help reduce the players' risk of communicable diseases and you'll probably notice better attendance at practices and games:

- **DO** encourage children to wash their hands with soap and water before and after playing outdoors. Hand washing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of diseases!
- **DO** bring alcohol-based waterless cleansers as a substitute for running water. Follow directions on the label.
- **DO** discourage children from sharing personal clothes, combs and brushes, mouthguards and equipment. If equipment is shared, check regularly for lice and other insects.
- **DO** tell team members not to drink from each other's cups and water bottles.
- **DO** wear protective water-proof gloves if you are cleaning up blood and other body fluids. Use soap and water to clean materials or surfaces that come in contact with body fluids. ■

www.ahealth.org

From the Anne Arundel County Department of Health's homepage, www.ahealth.org, the Coach's Clipboard and information on the following topics is just a click away.

Coach's Clipboard: Select Health Information and Promotion, click Youth Risk Reduction and select Coach's Clipboard.

Sun safety: Select Learn To Live. Then click Sun Safety.

Smoke-free kids: Click the Smoking Stinks icon, or select Learn To Live and click Youth and Tobacco.

Drug-free kids: Select Behavioral Health. Then click Adolescent and Family Services or visit www.theantidrug.com.

Healthy snacks: Select Health Information and Promotion. Next click Youth Risk Reduction. Choose Hydration Station and Fuel Stop.

Sports and dental injuries: Select Clinic and School Health. Click Dental Health Services and select Sports and Dental Injuries.

Drug-free Players

Coaches can help kids stay away from drinking, drugs and other harmful substances by keeping them occupied with positive recreational activities. In Anne Arundel County, 36 percent of eighth graders have reported using some form of alcohol. Approximately 4,700 American youth under age 18 try marijuana for the first time every day. In addition to legal and social consequences, drugs can have serious physical consequences too.

Be alert for these signs that a player may be using drugs or alcohol:

- Drop in performance or attendance
- Physical changes such as a persistent runny nose, red eyes, coughing or wheezing
- Uncharacteristic withdrawal from teammates or changes in friends or acquaintances
- Hostility and lack of cooperativeness
- Subtle changes in conversations with friends, using “coded” language to refer to drugs or drug paraphernalia

For information on what to do if you suspect a player is using drugs, visit the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign’s Web site, www.theantidrug.com. Enter “Adult Influencers Advice” into the search field. Then click on “Parents. The Anti-Drug.” ■

Insects and Other Animals

One easy way to prevent insect bites or stings is to suggest kids wear insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus according to label instructions. If there is a tick on a player, ask the parent to remove the tick immediately by using tweezers to grip the tick behind its head and as close to the skin as possible. If tweezers are not available, the tick should be removed with gloved or tissue-covered fingers. The bite should be cleaned with soap and water, and remind parents to save the tick in a closed jar in case identification is needed.

Never allow players to feed, pet or play with stray or wild animals. If a child gets an animal bite or scratch, wash the area with soap and water right away. Parents should call the child’s doctor or go to the nearest emergency room. Report animal scratches and bites to the Anne Arundel County Police Department, 410-222-8610. ■

Warm-up and Cool-down Tips

Proper warming up, stretching and cooling down can help reduce injuries as well as build fitness.

Pre-game

- Involve players in a low-intensity activity that slightly increases their heart rates for a few minutes.
- Once you’ve given players enough time to warm their muscles, focus on stretching large muscle groups (hamstring, calf and quads for the lower body; pectoralis major, deltoid and neck for the upper body) and the muscles they will use to perform the activity. Players should hold each stretch for 20 to 60 seconds.
- Immediately before the activity, lead players in exercises specific to the sport they will be playing. For example, soccer players can run up and down the sidelines.



Post-game

The cool-down period following physical activity is just as important as the warm-up. During this time children should reduce their heart and breathing rates and recover from exercise. Players should engage in a less intense walk or moderate to light physical activity immediately after play. This should be followed by light stretching of the muscles used during the game. ■

Beware of Poison Ivy

Leaves of three—let it be! Exposure to poison ivy plants can cause a severe rash, itching, redness, swelling and blisters. The rash is not contagious. Although the rash will not appear for 12 to 48 hours after exposure, prompt action can help make the reaction less painful.

- Clean the exposed skin with rubbing alcohol to remove the poison ivy’s oils.
- Wash the exposed skin with plenty of cool water.
- Equipment and anything else that may have been in contact with the poison ivy oils should be wiped off with alcohol and water. Wear gloves and discard the gloves afterwards.
- Suggest that parents wash the child’s clothes with detergent and have the child take a shower with soap as soon as possible. ■

Emergencies

While skilled coaches might guess a player's next move or predict a winning play, even the most informed coach cannot foresee a health emergency during playing time.

One of the best ways to keep kids safe is to encourage players to have a complete physical and get their doctor's approval before participating in sports. Coaches should ask parents if their child has any health conditions that could trigger a health episode during play. If so, ask parents for a plan to follow in case of an emergency. Having an established action plan can save you valuable time when responding to a medical emergency.

Below are some symptoms and suggestions for common health emergencies.

Recommended Action in All Cases:

- Stop activity
- Follow the emergency plan provided by parents
- Call the parents or call 911

Asthma Attack

Symptoms:

- Coughing/wheezing
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest tightness or pressure

Plan of Action:

- Help athlete with inhaler.
- Continue to watch the child to make sure he/she feels better.

Diabetic Reaction

Symptoms:

- Headache
- Dizziness or feeling faint
- Nausea

Plan of Action:

- If the athlete has sugar tablets, he or she should take them. If not, encourage the child to drink juice, eat candy or consume carbohydrate-rich food.
- When calling parents or 911, let caregivers know what happened and what was consumed.

Head and Neck Injuries

Impacts to the head or neck area may cause a concussion or spinal cord injury. Some symptoms of a concussion may not show up for days to weeks after the injury.

Symptoms:

- Headache or neck pain
- Dizziness, ringing in the ears or blurry vision
- More severe symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, confusion, unconsciousness, seizures, inability to move, radiating pain, numbness or loss of memory for the event.

Plan of Action:

- If there are any severe symptoms or a complaint of neck pain, assume there is a neck injury and do not move the athlete. Call 911 immediately and have the athlete keep his/her head still. Do not try to remove helmets or shoulder pads without the supervision of medical personnel.
- A physician should evaluate and clear the athlete before he or she returns to play.

Epileptic Seizure

Symptoms:

- Early signs vary; parents may be able to tell you what to notice. Typically the child falls to the ground unconscious and has spasms of uncontrolled movement. The child may lose bladder or bowel control and bite his/her tongue. Afterwards the child can be sleepy or confused.

Plan of Action:

- Have athlete lie on his or her side on the ground. Remove anything dangerous that could hurt the child. Especially protect the child's head from hitting sharp or hard surfaces or objects.

Sprains and Strains

Symptoms:

- Pain with movement of the joint or weight bearing
- Swelling and/or redness

Plan of Action:

- Remember RICE:
 - Rest the injured joint by taking the athlete out of play.
 - Ice or a cold pack should be placed on the injured joint to reduce swelling.
 - Compress the area by snugly wrapping the joint with an ace bandage.
 - Elevate the injured limb above the level of the heart.
- The athlete may need to follow up with a health care provider to ensure proper healing and injury rehabilitation.

If you have never taken first aid or CPR, consider doing so, since this will help prepare you for many kinds of medical emergencies. If you have no training and an emergency happens, you should not try to evaluate the player yourself. Check with nearby adults for someone who has training or knows the child's medical needs. This person can help until an ambulance arrives, but don't delay before calling 911. ■



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